

SPIRITUAL FORMATION FOR HOLISTIC HUMAN HEALTH:
CONNECTIONS BETWEEN WEIGHT LOSS
AND WOMEN'S CREATIVITY

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ABSTRACT

SPIRITUAL FORMATION FOR HOLISTIC HUMAN HEALTH: CONNECTIONS BETWEEN WEIGHT LOSS AND WOMEN’S CREATIVITY

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This collaborative, spiritual formation-based model presents a holistic approach to helping women increase their health in spirit, mind, body, and relationships, to achieve greater well being including possible weight loss for some participants, and to experience heightened creativity. The project employed both quantitative and qualitative action research methods. The seven-week study showed that the participants’ well being increased, with one expression of health being that 59.4% lost weight, while 96.9% reported heightened creativity. Women who lost weight reported greater gains in creativity than women who did not lose weight, suggesting that weight loss may be a driver for positive change in creativity.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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DEDICATION

In memory of
Deborah L. Campbell
1947 – 2002

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BMI – Body Mass Index

ca. – circa; about

etc. – et cetera; and so on

KJV – King James Version

NHI – National Health Institute

NHLBI – National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute

NRSV – New Revised Standard Version

OB/GYN – Obstetrical/Gynecological; also, a physician specializing in obstetrics and gynecology

OSL – The Order of Saint Luke

UMC – United Methodist Church

INTRODUCTION

“Woman, you are set free from your ailment.” These are the words of Jesus the Teacher and Healer, recorded in Luke 13:10-17, spoken as he called to a bent over woman. A spirit had crippled her body for eighteen years. In the midst of Sabbath observance in the synagogue, among the crowd, this woman quietly drew near to Jesus. He noticed her. He called to her. She responded by coming closer to Jesus. Now fully in one another’s presence, Jesus spoke words of freedom and release to this woman. He touched her with his healing hands. Jesus restored her well being and created within her the gift of renewed life. The woman was set free from bondage and made whole. Released from her ailment, she became able. Her encounter with Christ transformed this woman from crippled to creative. Luke’s Gospel reports that immediately she stood up straight and began creating acts of praise to God.

In his book *Momentum for Life*, Mike Slaughter writes, “You were created to be creative. This is the work that Jesus wants to release in your life. This is what it means to be created in the image of God.”¹ However, human beings become crippled in their attempts to fully live into God’s purpose and potential because of their spiritual, mental, physical, and relational brokenness.

¹ Michael Slaughter, *Momentum for Life: Biblical Principles for Sustaining Physical Health, Personal Integrity, and Strategic Focus*. Revised Edition (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2008), 49.

This project is a model of congregational ministry which can help women recover and increase their well being in spirit, mind, body, and relationships, resulting in their increased creativity. During September and October 2009, thirty-nine women engaged in *A Journey in Women's Wellness*, a six-session curriculum written by the researcher. This curriculum is rooted in Christian spiritual formation practices and Christian scripture, drawn primarily from Luke's Gospel. The class sessions included experiential learning of practices from around the world that have been found helpful to fostering health and wholeness, including nutrition education, tai chi, qigong, dance, music for meditation, making mandalas, and healing touch (see Glossary.) Participants set personal wellness goals in the areas of spiritual, mental, physical, and relational health. The women established relationships within the group that became a support system for their wellness journey.

In addition to achieving other health goals, 59.4% of the thirty-two women who completed post-surveys reported that they lost weight during the time of this study. The researcher was curious about the connection between increased health and increased creativity. It is logical that as people gain more abundant life through recovery of health, they may find they have more creative energy and begin to invest that energy in new ways. Specifically, the researcher was curious about the possible relationship between weight loss and increased creativity. Julia Cameron, an expert in teaching creative unblocking, observed a phenomenon among her students. Over the twelve weeks of participating in her creativity courses, students who were overweight ended the course visibly more fit and trim. Cameron observed that weight loss is a frequent by-product of

creative recovery. She reasoned that if overeating blocks our creativity, then the reverse is also true: people can use creativity to block their overeating.²

The study explored several questions:

- If overeating blocks our creativity, could weight loss unblock our creativity?
- What drives change in women's creativity?
- What blocks or releases it?
- Could a spiritual formation curriculum focused upon helping women become healthier in spirit, mind, body and relationships foster increased overall well being and wholeness?
- Could this program help overweight and obese women lose weight?
- Would women who lose weight experience an upsurge in their creativity?
If so, is weight loss the driver, or is something else causing this outcome of increased creativity?
- What stories would the participants have to share about their wellness journey?

The researcher set out to explore the above questions, using the model of creating a new curriculum to teach spiritual formation for holistic human health coupled with pre and post-surveys to discover what the learning experience might yield. Neither “weight loss” nor “creativity” was mentioned in the invitation to the class. The outcome of the project indicates that for this group of thirty-nine women, weight loss plus engagement in spiritual formation curriculum focused upon holistic human health as part of Christian

² Julia Cameron, *The Writing Diet: Write Yourself Right-Size* (New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Penguin, 2008), xv.

congregational ministry yielded increased overall human wellness and wholeness, specifically including gain in creativity. Nineteen of the thirty-two women completing post-surveys reported weight loss. All nineteen of them reported increased creativity, as assessed through their responses to eighteen questions. While twelve of the thirteen respondents who did not lose weight did report increased creativity, their degree of increased creativity was not as high as the scores reported by the women who lost weight.

The researcher sought to create a replicable model of ministry that would be not only informational but transformational. The post-surveys indicate that this model of ministry helped women become healthier in spirit, mind, body, and relationships, and also helped them become more creative persons. Teaching this model in the local church may be beneficial in the personal lives of women. The benefits may extend to create increased health and well being among families and communities. Additionally, this teaching model may have usefulness when used in conjunction with ministries of congregational discipleship and new member assimilation. Engagement in this curriculum may serve as an entry point for individuals' first time contact with the local congregation. The model may serve as a means to deepen relationships with Christ, both for persons new to the church and for longtime disciples. *A Journey in Women's Wellness* is a model of personal inner work that may lead participants to engage in creative outer work for Christ in the world.

Chapter One – Ministry Focus

The first chapter contains background information concerning the general and specific areas this model addresses. The project arises from the researcher's interest in the broad area of spiritual formation for preaching, worship, and the arts. This ministry model is a congregational teaching curriculum with focus upon spiritual formation for holistic human health, with specific attention to the relationship between weight loss and increased creativity. Chapter One relates how the researcher chose this topic of inquiry. This section also offers the reader information concerning the ministry context at Mason United Methodist Church in Mason, Ohio.

Chapter Two – Review of Literature

This section paints an overview of some of the work accomplished by others in the areas of spiritual formation for holistic human health, weight loss, and creativity. Chapter Two briefly reviews more than seventy resources which the researcher found most informative to the development of the project.

Chapter Three – Theoretical Foundation

This portion establishes the historical, biblical, and theological foundations upon which this model rests. It also covers additional theoretical foundations for both the project hypotheses and *A Journey in Women's Wellness* curriculum. Chapter Three includes a discussion of overweight, obesity, and weight loss. In addition, this section offers several definitions of creativity.

Chapter Four – Methodology

This chapter presents and discusses the project hypothesis, describes the project, and explains the research design, including the measurement and instrumentation used in this mixed research methodology. This section includes an overview of the project curriculum, providing a synopsis of the materials presented during each of the six sessions. Chapter Four contains listings of each week's scripture foundations, spiritual formation exercises, spotlighted women from Christian history, as well as the roster of featured special presenters who served as collaborative partners in this project.

Chapter Five – Field Experience

This section tells the story of what the participants in the study reported that they experienced as a result of *A Journey in Women's Wellness*. It describes the collection and analysis of data, and the outcome of the study. Chapter Five includes verbatim responses from the thirty-two respondents who completed the post-survey, indicating the ways in which the participants experienced change in their well being during the study. This portion of the chapter features the journey story of the participant who experienced both the biggest weight loss and the greatest gain in creativity.

Chapter Six – Reflection, Summary, and Conclusion

This chapter contains the researcher's reflections, insights, summary, and conclusions regarding the study. Chapter Six ponders the question of whether or not this project made a positive difference to either the researcher or the ministry context. It

explores the possible far-reaching effects of the implementation of this model, and casts a vision for further development of this ministry model. This section includes ideas for how the model could be improved, plus suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

Rationale for Selection of this Area of Ministry

This ministry project is a spiritual formation model for use in the local church. The researcher sees spiritual formation as the beginning point and primary focus of the project. The overall purpose of this model is to help form participants in the mind and image of Christ. Experiential learning of spiritual practices from Christian contemplative tradition forms a foundational component of the six session curriculum, *A Journey in Women's Wellness*, written and led by the researcher.

A more specific focus of this model is holistic human health. A typical understanding of the phrase “holistic human health” is limited to body, mind, and spirit. The researcher, however, sees holistic human health as more encompassing than this three-fold concept. Inspired by James K. Wagner’s 1993 book, *An Adventure in Healing and Wholeness: The Healing Ministry of Christ in the Church Today*, the researcher sought to expand upon Wagner’s work. In particular, the researcher agrees with Wagner’s understanding of human health and wholeness being comprised of the interconnectedness of the body or physical self; the soul or spiritual self; the mind or emotional, thinking, feeling self; and relationships connecting persons with others and the world. Human relationships hold significant power for both hurting and healing. However, this relational

aspect of holistic human health is often ignored. The researcher's ministry model introduces participants to Wagner's four-fold concept of holistic human health as spirit, mind, body, and relationships.¹ Furthermore, this model encourages participants to reflect upon their current state of health in each of the four areas, assess personal health strengths and weaknesses, set goals for positive change, and work toward accomplishment of those goals in an atmosphere of support.

Further narrowing the focus of the project, the researcher explored weight loss as a specific physical wellness goal. Obesity is one of the most serious preventable health conditions impacting adults in the U. S. today. Disabling and life-threatening illnesses including Type 2 diabetes, high cholesterol, hypertension, stroke, coronary heart disease, osteoarthritis, sleep apnea, respiratory problems, certain forms of cancer, and mobility problems in overweight and obese individuals may be prevented, reversed, or eliminated through weight loss. Over the past twenty years, obesity has increased in the United States, with more than 64% of adults now being classified as overweight or obese. Over fifty-nine million of these individuals are obese, and therefore in the highest risk category for both disease and premature death.² According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in 2008 only one state, Colorado, had an obesity rate of less than 20%. In thirty-two states, 25% or more residents are obese. Six states have a prevalence of obesity equal to or greater than 30% of the population.³ United States Government statistics indicate that since 1976, obesity among children aged two to five years has increased

¹ James K. Wagner, *An Adventure in Healing and Wholeness: The Healing Ministry of Christ in the Church Today*. (Nashville, TN: Upper Room Books, 1993), 27-34.

² The Obesity Society, "Obesity Statistics." http://www.obesity.org/statistics/obesity_trends.asp (accessed April 8, 2010).

³ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "U.S. Obesity Trends." <http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/data/trends/htm>. (accessed April 8, 2010).

from 5.0% to 12.4%. In children aged six to eleven years, obesity has increased from 6.5% to 17.0%, and for adolescents aged twelve to nineteen years, prevalence of obesity has increased from 5.0% to 17.6%.⁴ First Lady Michelle Obama has founded an initiative named Let's Move, with the goal of solving the epidemic of childhood obesity within a generation.⁵

The researcher wanted to encourage overweight and obese women to improve their well being through weight loss and increased physical activity. This ministry model equips participants with greater knowledge and support for gaining health through weight loss. Additionally, the researcher was curious about a possible relationship between weight loss and increased creativity. The research hypothesis focuses upon exploring the question of how weight loss may drive increased women's creativity.

In designing this ministry model, the researcher saw spiritual formation as the entry point for fostering women's overall wholeness and well being in spirit, mind, body, relationships, and increased creativity. The researcher's interest in Christian spiritual formation began in 1978, through engagement with ministries, resources, and staff of The Upper Room, an extension of The United Methodist General Board of Discipleship, located in Nashville, Tennessee. Later, as a seminarian and student pastor in 1998, the researcher joined a ten month Servant Leadership formation group, meeting weekly under the leadership of The Reverend Deborah L. Campbell. This small group experience in the West Ohio Conference of The United Methodist Church was inspired by the work of Gordon Cosby and The Church of the Saviour in Washington, D.C. Campbell shared her

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Let's Move! "America's Move to Raise a Healthier Generation of Kids."
<http://letsmove.gov/index.html> (accessed April 8, 2010).

disciplined inward/outward Christian journey with the group. The example of her spiritual life inspired the researcher to grow.

After seminary graduation, the researcher continued to be encouraged to learn and teach spiritual formation by Campbell, and also by Barbara Cummings Lee. She also began meeting with a spiritual director. In 2001 the researcher joined The Order of Saint Luke (OSL), a religious order within The United Methodist Church, open to all persons, both clergy and laity. The researcher's relationship with OSL further sustained and nurtured her interest in spiritual formation and worship. From 2003 to the present, other significant influences upon the researcher's ongoing interest in spiritual formation include the programs Covenant Discipleship, Wesleyan Institute, and Five Day Academy of Spiritual Formation.

The researcher's interest in women's holistic health traces to 1974. As a first-time expectant mother, she read voraciously concerning pregnancy, childbirth, nutrition, and breastfeeding. While raising a family of four breastfed children, she nurtured other expectant and new mothers as a La Leche League leader and conference speaker, and as an assistant childbirth educator. More recently, while appointed as English language pastor at Dayton Korean United Methodist Church from 2003 to 2005, the researcher learned about the healthy nutritional principles of a traditional Korean diet. From 2006 through the present, the researcher has continued to learn and increasingly apply principles of healthy eating to her daily life.

The researcher chose to design this model of ministry for adult women only. While basic principles of holistic human health apply to both males and females of all ages, gender and age differences may impact the outcome of this study by creating

numerous research variables. Therefore, the researcher chose not to include children, adolescents, or males as participants in this project. This ministry model was created from a woman's health perspective, and sought to include learning activities that would appeal to adult women. In addition, the researcher felt that the participants would experience greater comfort discussing personal issues of holistic health in a group limited to adult women.

Special interests of the researcher in the area of holistic health include Reiki, a form of energy bodywork. Seeking ways to cope with stress, the researcher first received Reiki treatments in 2004 from Margaret Knapke in Dayton, Ohio, found the treatments effective, and became certified as a second degree Reiki practitioner in 2005. A similar modality of complementary medicine, Healing Touch, has gained acceptance in Cincinnati area hospitals and was incorporated into *A Journey in Women's Wellness*.

This ministry project was born from the researcher's journey of recovery from obesity. Motivated by a health assessment in November 2008 that identified her not only as obese but also at high risk of developing life-threatening illnesses, she embarked upon a significant lifestyle change in nutrition and daily activity level beginning November 15, 2008. The researcher followed the Weight Watchers system of accounting for calories, fat, and fiber contained in daily food intake, and established a daily exercise routine of thirty minutes or more. She embraced a plant-based diet and eliminated processed foods from her life. She set a weight loss goal of forty pounds, or twenty-five percent of her body weight, in forty weeks, which would bring her weight well within normal for her height and cause her to drop eight sizes of jeans. Accomplishment of this goal took forty-five

weeks, slightly longer than anticipated, and coincided with the first session of *A Journey in Women's Wellness* on September 19, 2009.

Through personal experience, the researcher became inspired to help others achieve healthy weight loss. She sought to understand her own struggle with overeating. She identified four cycles in her personal life of weight gain resulting in obesity, followed by successful intentional weight loss and return to normal weight for her height. This pattern of weight gain and loss began during elementary school, repeated at age twenty, again at age forty, and yet again in her late forties. Each season of unhealthy weight gain was precipitated by life events of loss and grief, during which stressful times the researcher sought comfort in overeating high fat, high calorie food, and also became more sedentary. Similarly, the researcher identified a pattern in her cycles of recovery of normal weight. Each time, the catalyst for intentional weight loss and recovery of health came in the form of individuals who helped the researcher acknowledge her weight problem, and pointed her toward a solution. Perhaps she could now develop a ministry model that would help other women assess, acknowledge, and overcome their overweight and obesity, thereby discovering new well being, health, and wholeness. The researcher also noticed that her own seasons of recovery of physical health through weight loss were preceded by increased spiritual, mental, and relational health. Many women struggle with difficult life issues that impact their spirit, mind, body, and relationships. Sometimes these difficulties become incarnated as overweight and obesity. The researcher developed a holistic understanding of her own journey from obesity to restored health and created a ministry project out of this experience of personal transformation.

In addition to designing a replicable ministry model of spiritual formation for holistic health, with intentional weight loss of participants as one possible outcome, the researcher explored a question that arose from a phenomenon she experienced. During the researcher's successful forty-pound weight loss, she noticed an unusual increase in her creative energy. She expected that weight loss would cause a greater sense of physical energy. She did not, however, anticipate that losing weight might give rise to increased creativity. The onset of her creative expression began to occur in March 2009. Earlier in life, the researcher had studied piano, organ, violin, guitar, and vocal music, but had seldom played an instrument for twenty years. On Saturday, March 28, 2009, she awakened at 3:00 A.M. with an overwhelming desire to play her piano, which she did for three straight hours. Fortunately, she was home alone, except for her three cats, and no neighbors were in close proximity. In the days that followed, she began composing music which she shared with others, including colleagues and congregants at her church. The researcher began wondering whether others who lose weight experience heightened creativity, and whether the local church could serve as an incubator for increasing women's well being, including fostering both healthy weight loss and increased creativity.

Ministry Context

This ministry model was implemented at Mason United Methodist Church in Mason, Ohio. The researcher serves as Associate Pastor of this church, giving oversight to ministries of teaching, discipleship, and spiritual formation, as well as preaching and worship leadership. This growing congregation of nearly 1,000 members is located in northern greater Cincinnati. Congregational growth projections suggest that this

congregation is poised to reach 2,000 members by 2015. Founded in 1837, the congregation relocated from the original site in the heart of Mason to what was the growing edge of the city in 1987. Phase One of the church building project was a multipurpose room, narthex, kitchen, six classrooms, and offices built near the intersection of Tylersville and Mason-Montgomery roads. Phase Two, a classroom addition, was completed in 1993. Groundbreaking for Phase Three, a new 15,000 square foot sanctuary and narthex addition, took place in September 2009, and is scheduled for occupancy by December 2010.

Many longtime church members see the current building addition as a sign of congregational healing. In 2002, the former church secretary was found guilty of embezzlement of approximately \$250,000 of church funds. In addition, at that time the church carried about \$480,000 in debt. Therefore, when Dr. George C. Phillips became senior pastor in 2003, his first several years of ministry were concerned with congregational healing of mutual trust, and establishing sound financial practices. The former church secretary made restitution, and the financial health of the church increased. The previous debt was paid. The congregation purchased a second parsonage in 2008. The building fund grew. The 2009 building fund campaign was successful. Construction on the building addition began in fall 2009. This congregation has experienced recovery of well being during the seven-year journey from brokenness to ground-breaking.

The journey toward building Phase Three took sixteen years from the completion of Phase Two to the beginning of construction on the current building project. During 2008 the congregation engaged in significant self-assessment, which led to the birthing of a “One + One + One” ministry model. The vision is that every member will engage in

one hour of worship, one hour of learning, and one hour of service as a weekly average. This model conveys the importance of living a balanced, inward/outward Christian life. Mason United Methodist Church is experiencing a season of congregational health recovery, following a season of wounding. Because this church has been transformed from illness to wellness, this ministry context is equipped to support individuals in their journey toward healing and wholeness.

People in this congregation want to do well and to be well, both as a community and as individuals. Particularly in recent times of economic hardship, some families and individuals are acknowledging that they are experiencing significant stress, which in turn has a negative effect upon their health in spirit, mind, body, and relationships. *A Journey in Women's Wellness* was enthusiastically received, in part because it helped women cope with stress, form supportive relationships, to feel more positive about their lives, and to help women increase their well being. In this current season of creating a building addition, the congregational ethos at Mason United Methodist Church in the fall of 2009 was ready to embrace an innovative ministry model for spiritual formation and holistic human health.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter will include a brief review of the resources that the author found most helpful and significant in designing the research project. Several foundational works will be highlighted and further discussed in Chapter Three. A complete listing of all sources that informed this work appears in the Bibliography.

Spiritual Formation

The general topic of the researcher's project was spiritual formation. A good beginning place for understanding the scope of Christian spiritual formation is *The Upper Room Dictionary of Christian Spiritual Formation*, edited by Keith Beasley-Topliffe, 2003. The list of contributors on page nine includes the names of many of the most highly regarded writers currently working in this field.

Julian of Norwich Showings stands as one of the most important classical works in Christian spirituality. The researcher drew specifically from the works of this fourteenth century contemplative in the creation of the project. In addition to Julian of Norwich, the project was informed by the life and work of several other medieval holy women. Resources included *Medieval Women Monastics: Wisdom's Wellsprings*, edited by Miriam Schmitt and Linda Kulzer, illustrated by Mary Michael Kaliher, 1996. Another helpful book is *The Female Mystic: Great Women Thinkers of the Middle Ages*

by Andrea Janelle Dickens, 2009. Dickens' chapter regarding Hildegard of Bingen, pages twenty-five through thirty-eight, was especially informative.

Additional works that may be regarded as spiritual formation classics include *The Better Part: Stages of Contemplative Living* by Thomas Keating, 2000; *Finding Grace at the Center* by Thomas Keating, M. Basil Pennington, and Thomas E. Clarke, 1978; and *The Seven Storey Mountain* by Thomas Merton, 1948. All the works of Henri J. M. Nouwen are informative to the study of Christian spiritual formation. Among his works, the researcher's favorite since first encountering it in 1998 is *Life of the Beloved: Spiritual Living in a Secular World*, 1997. Nouwen uses the scriptural four-fold action of the Eucharist (taken, blessed, broken, given) as his framework for understanding God's love relationship with humans. *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth* by Quaker theologian Richard J. Foster, 1978, has been credited with bringing spiritual formation practices to the attention of Protestant Christianity. Dallas Willard's *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives*, 1988, provides a spiritual formation perspective from a Southern Baptist viewpoint. Willard's book is currently included as required reading for United Methodist provisional clergy members in the West Ohio Conference.

Other authors and works are also important in the study of spiritual formation. *Living in the Presence: Spiritual Exercises to Open Our Lives to the Awareness of God* by Tilden Edwards, 1987, is an important text. His chapter on Embodiment, pages 16-33 is of specific interest to this project. *Soul Feast: An Invitation to the Christian Spiritual Life* by Marjorie J. Thompson, 1995, is an excellent primer. *Holy Listening: The Art of Spiritual Direction* by Margaret Guenther, 1992, provides a one-to-one model of spiritual

formation. John Ackerman's book *Listening to God: Spiritual Formation in Congregations*, 2001, helps the reader see spiritual formation as not only something that one engages as an individual, but is also about forming communities. Ackerman defines spiritual formation as "the process whereby we grow in our ability to pay attention, the way we help form what God is doing. It involves all the ways we are being formed in the image of Christ in our inner life and outer ministry. Spiritual formation is the congregation growing in its ability to learn about God, to grow toward becoming a community like the Trinity."¹ Ackerman's definition helps inform this spiritual formation project, as it was designed for implementation in a local church setting. *Walking a Sacred Path: Rediscovering the Labyrinth as a Spiritual Tool* by Lauren Artress, 1995, has been a foundational book in the spiritual life of the researcher, leading to additional study with Artress in France, California, and Ohio. The researcher's labyrinth experience was both formative and insightful in developing an understanding of healing and wholeness in spirit, mind, body, relationship, and creativity. Reference to the labyrinth appears in *A Journey in Women's Wellness* during discussion of archetypes and mandalas. *Food for Pilgrims: A Journey with Saint Luke* by Dwight W. Vogel, 1996, provides excellent insight into the characteristics of Lukan spirituality. The researcher drew upon The Gospel of Luke for most of the scriptural foundations of the project.

Four additional spiritual formation resources require acknowledgment. Teresa A. Blythe's book *50 Ways to Pray: Practices from Many Traditions and Times*, 2006, is a helpful resource from which the researcher drew several exercises included in *A Journey in Women's Wellness* project curriculum. *Praying in Color: Drawing a New Path to God*

¹ John Ackerman, *Listening to God: Spiritual Formation in Congregations* (Bethesda, MD: The Alban Institute, 2001), 135.

by Sybil MacBeth, 2007, prompted the author to include experiences with drawing and coloring in the project curriculum. Phyllis Tickle's three-volume work *The Divine Hours: A Manual for Prayer*, 2001, has been the researcher's primary daily devotional guide since its publication. *Upper Room Worshipbook: Music and Liturgies for Spiritual Formation*, compiled and edited by Elise S. Eslinger, 2006, provides an excellent resource for both personal devotion and community worship.

Health, Healing, and Wholeness

The author's understanding of holistic health and of the potential for ministries related to healing and wholeness springs from the work of James K. Wagner. The four-fold understanding of holistic health as spirit, mind, body, and relationship comes from pages thirty through thirty-seven of Wagner's *An Adventure In Healing & Wholeness*, 1993. Other books by Wagner that inform this project include *Blessed to Be a Blessing: How to Have an Intentional Healing Ministry in Your Church*, 1980; *The Spiritual Heart of Your Health: A Devotional Guide on the Healing Stories of Jesus*, 2002; *Forgiveness: The Jesus Way: The Proven Path To Be Forgiving And Forgiven*, 2007; and *Healing Services*, 2007.

In consultation as a professional associate for this project, Wagner pointed the researcher toward the work of Howard Clinebell, including *Anchoring Your Well Being: Christian Wholeness in a Fractured World*, 1997. Clinebell saw health as seven dimensional. In addition to including the spiritual, mental, physical, and relational aspects of human health, Clinebell included work and play, crisis and loss, and environmental

well being in his model of health.² A third resource for personal and congregational health is *Momentum for Life: Biblical Principles for Sustaining Physical Health, Personal Integrity, and Strategic Focus* by Michael Slaughter, 2005. Slaughter organizes his model around the acronym D-R-I-V-E, which stands for Devotion, Readiness, Investing, Vision, and Eating and Exercise.³ An additional resource for healing, wholeness, and transformation of persons, systems, and congregations is Margaret Kornfield's *Cultivating Wholeness: A Guide to Care and Counseling in Faith Communities*, 2004. In this book, Kornfield organizes her model around the image of the gardener. While the researcher found all four of the above models informative, this project was based upon Wagner's model of holistic human health in spirit, mind, body, and relationships.

Intersection of Spirit, Mind, Body, and Relationships

The researcher found several resources helpful in understanding this four-fold model of human wholeness. Among other significant works, Flora Slosson Wuellner authored *Prayer and Our Bodies*, 1987, and *Prayer, Stress and Our Inner Wounds*, 1985. Jane Vennard's book *Praying with Body and Soul: A Way to Intimacy with God*, 1998, grew from her experience that began when she enrolled in a dance class. She writes, "What I discovered was a spiritual practice that grounded my love of God in my body,

² Howard Clinebell, *Anchoring Your Well Being: Christian Wholeness in a Fractured World* (Nashville, TN: Upper Room Books, 1997), pages 17-35.

³ Michael Slaughter, *Momentum for Life: Biblical Principles for Sustaining Physical Health, Personal Integrity, and Strategic Focus* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2005), pages 6-24.

released my creativity, and taught me the truth about surrender.”⁴ The researcher drew curriculum material from *Praying with the Body: Bringing the Psalms to Life*, by Roy DeLeon, 2009. Caroline Myss has authored numerous works regarding the interconnectedness of spirit, mind, body, and relationships, including *Anatomy of the Spirit: The Seven Stages of Power and Healing*, 1996. The research project curriculum includes references to body energy work, including Reiki and Healing Touch modalities. *Hands of Light: A Guide to Healing Through the Human Energy Field* by Barbara Ann Brennan, 1987, provides a primer into this field of complementary medicine. *Healing Touch: The Church's Forgotten Language* by Zach Thomas, 1994, is authored by a certified bodywork therapist, parish minister, and hospital chaplain. Thomas brings insight through his multi-faceted professional experience in healing and wholeness. He defines health and wholeness as “cooperation with the Creator for reorganizing unbalanced aspects of life in order to live more deeply integrated personally and communally.”⁵

Women's Well Being, Feminist Theology, and Image of God

This research project curriculum was designed specifically for women. A foundational and indispensable book regarding women's holistic health is Christiane Northrup's *Women's Bodies, Women's Wisdom: Creating Physical and Emotional Health and Healing*, 1994. A resource for ministry with women is *Through the Eyes of Women: Insights for Pastoral Care*, edited by Jeanne Stevenson Moessner, 1996. This book

⁴ Jane Vennard, *Praying with Body and Soul: A Way to Intimacy with God* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1998), v.

⁵ Zach Thomas, *Healing Touch: The Church's Forgotten Language* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1994), 45.

contains eighteen articles written by leading women professors of pastoral care, including Emma J. Justes.

Research for this project in women's well being explored understandings of feminist theology, including Rosemary Radford Ruether's groundbreaking book *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology*, 1983 and Valerie Saiving's 1960 definition of women's sin.⁶ *The Image of God: Gender Models in Judaeo-Christian Tradition*, edited by Kari Elisabeth Borresen, 1995, provides additional insights into feminist theology and how this perspective intersects with women's well being in spirit, mind, body, relationship, and creativity.

A woman's image of God and her image of herself in the eyes of God have significant impact upon her well being. Authors whose work is significant to this discussion include Mary Catherine Hilkert's *Naming Grace: Preaching and the Sacramental Imagination*, 2005 and *Learning to Lead from Your Spiritual Center* by Patricia D. Brown, 1996. Several of Roberta C. Bondi's books, including *To Pray & to Love: Conversations on Prayer with the Early Church*, 1991, and *A Place to Pray: Reflections on the Lord's Prayer*, 1998, also bring light to this topic.

Several additional authors provide insight into larger issues of the human condition that impact women's well being. In *Preaching as Weeping, Confession, and Resistance: Radical Responses to Radical Evil*, 1992, Christine M. Smith confronts handicappism, ageism, heterosexism, sexism, white racism, and classism. *Survivor Prayers: Talking with God about Childhood Sexual Abuse* by Catherine J. Foote, 1994, provides more than a book about prayer, more than a book about sexual abuse. Several

⁶ Owen C. Thomas and Ellen K. Wondra, *Introduction to Theology*, 3rd ed. (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 2002), 140.

prayers in this volume might well be the heart-cries of women who have been wounded in spirit, body, mind, or relationships, including this one:

I Celebrate God's Grace

Well, this is the truth about what happened.
 It really hurt. I was really scared.
 And then I lost myself, for years.
 I learned how to pretend so well that I forgot I was pretending.
 I learned how to hide so well that I forgot where to find me.
 I learned to mold myself so well that I forgot my form.
 I forgot the truth.
 Before you now I practice.
 I practice my feelings, my form, myself.
 I practice remembering.
 I practice the truth.
 And I celebrate your patience with the practicing.
 I celebrate your grace.
 I celebrate the space you've given me to learn.
 And you reach me, as a searcher, with grace, with space, with love.

Amen.⁷

Theology of Woundedness and Healing

Matthew Linn, Sheila Fabricant Linn, and Dennis Linn are collaborators for numerous insightful and enjoyable books regarding the image of God, sin, forgiveness, healing, and prayer. Their book *Healing the Eight Stages of Life*, 1988, develops Erik Erikson's eight stages of human development into a model for healing. Informed by Erikson's work, the Linns write that "Our own understanding of human weakness and sin

⁷ Catherine J. Foote, *Survivor Prayers: Talking with God about Childhood Sexual Abuse* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1994), 51.

is that sin is fundamentally the overuse or underuse of a gift. Sexual sins, for example, are the overuse or underuse of the gift of intimacy.”⁸

Illness and disease of spirit, mind, body, and relationship may find origin in deep woundedness. Andrew Sung Park has written several books regarding the perspective of persons and communities who have been sinned against. He describes the Asian concept of *han* as the deep despair and painful suffering rooted in the anguish of the victim.⁹ Other resources by Park that inform the researcher’s theology of holistic human healing include *Racial Conflict and Healing: An Asian-American Theological Perspective*, 1996; *The Other Side of Sin: Woundedness from the Perspective of the Sinned-Against*, 2001; *From Hurt to Healing: A Theology of the Wounded*, 2004; and *Triune Atonement: Christ’s Healing for Sinners, Victims, and the Whole Creation*, 2009.

Wesleyan Connection

A research project designed for implementation in a United Methodist Congregation would be incomplete without calling upon the resources of the denomination’s Wesleyan roots. *John Wesley’s Sermons: An Anthology*, edited by Albert C. Outler and Richard P. Heitzenrater, 1991, provides the primary source for Wesley’s theology. Other classic resources regarding Wesley and the early Methodists include *John Wesley*, edited by Albert C. Outler, 1964, and *Wesley and the People Called Methodists* by Richard P. Heitzenrater, 1995. Current Wesley scholars include Randy L. Maddox, Jason E. Vickers, and Paul Chilcote. Wesley’s contributions to the discussion of

⁸ Matthew Linn, Sheila Fabricant, and Dennis Linn, *Healing the Eight Stages of Life* (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1988), 16.

⁹ Andrew Sung Park, *The Wounded Heart of God: The Asian Concept of Han and the Christian Doctrine of Sin* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1993), 16.

holistic human health include his 1747 medical guide, *Primitiv Physick, or an Easy and Natural Method of Curing Most Diseases*.

Overweight, Obesity, and Weight Loss

A Journey in Women's Wellness curriculum presented participants with information concerning assessment of overweight and obesity. This information included an explanation of Body Mass Index (BMI), significance of waist circumference, and risk factors and conditions associated with obesity. These resources were obtained from http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/obesity/lose_wt/bmi_dis.htm on September 25, 2009.

One helpful approach to weight loss is taught by Weight Watchers. Information about their system may be accessed at <http://www.weightwatchers.com>.

Biblical Interpretation

The scriptural foundations for *A Journey in Women's Wellness* rest upon Genesis 1:26-2:3; Luke 9:10-17; Luke 11:1-4 and 9; and Luke 13:10-14. The author used primarily The New Revised Standard Version of the Bible. Curriculum also included exercises which drew comparisons between the NRSV, *The Message* by Eugene Peterson, The Good News Bible, and The King James Version. The researcher's resources for biblical interpretation included *Genesis* by Walter Brueggemann, 1982, from the series *Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*, and *Luke* by Fred B. Craddock, 1990, also a volume from the *Interpretation* series. The researcher also

consulted *The New Interpreter's Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes*, volumes I and IX, for additional material regarding the books of Genesis and Luke.

Creativity

Two resources that became invaluable to this research project were both written by Julia Cameron, who has taught courses in creativity for more than twenty-five years. *The Artist's Way: A Spiritual Path to Higher Creativity*, 1992, presents Cameron's course in discovering and recovering the creative self. More recently, Cameron published *The Writing Diet: Write Yourself Right-Size*, 2007. In working with writers who wanted to unblock their creativity, Cameron observed that as they succeeded in writing, they lost weight. She wrote, "To my seasoned eye, weight loss is a frequent by-product of creative recovery. Overeating blocks our creativity. The flip side is also true: we can use creativity to block our overeating."¹⁰ Cameron tells her readers, "As you write, you will lose weight and gain creativity."¹¹ Similarly, this research project explored the connection between women's weight loss and increased creativity.

Several other resources were helpful in learning more about creativity and the human brain. These works include *Our Spiritual Brain: Integrating Brain Research and Faith Development* by Barbara Bruce, 2002, and *The Creative Brain* by Ned Herrmann, 1989.

¹⁰ Julia Cameron, *The Writing Diet: Write Yourself Right-Size* (New York, NY: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Penguin, 2007), xv.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, xix.

Gifts, Call, and Community

Objectives of this research project included increasing the overall well being of individual women and of the larger community. It is exciting when an individual gains health and increased creativity. Even more exciting is seeing that individual use her newfound gifts for the greater good. Humanity is gifted by the Creator with creativity so that individuals can use their gifts to accomplish God's kingdom reign. Several resources from the ecumenical Church of the Saviour in Washington, D.C., founded by N. Gordon Cosby, are helpful works regarding gifts, call, and community. A staff member from 1953 until her death in 1998, Elizabeth O'Connor was one of the most prolific voices to arise from Church of the Saviour. Her books include *Eighth Day of Creation: Discovering Your Gifts and Using Them*, 1971; *Cry Pain, Cry Hope: A Guide to the Dimensions of Call*, 1987; and *Servant Leaders, Servant Structures*, 1991. Verna Dozier also writes about gifts, call, and community and the ministry of the laity in her works including *The Dream of God: A Call to Return*, 1991. Another important writer in this field is Jean Vanier, founder of L'Arche movement of residential communities for persons with mental disabilities. His works include *From Brokenness to Community*, 1992.

Autobiography

The process of writing the spiritual autobiography as a component of this doctoral project was exceptionally insightful for the researcher. Model autobiographies that informed the project included *With Head and Heart* by Howard Thurman and *The*

Substance of Things Hoped For: A Memoir of African-American Faith by Samuel DeWitt Proctor.

Basic Tools for Doctoral Research and Writing

In addition to *The United Theological Seminary Doctor of Ministry Student Handbook*, three other basic resources constitute the researcher's basic toolkit. These three books are Kate L. Turabian's *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations, Seventh Edition*, 2007; Barbara W. Cheshire's *The Best Dissertation...A Finished Dissertation (or Thesis)*, 1993; and John W. Cresswell's *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 2003.

Summary

This review of resources includes the title, author, and brief description of seventy-five works that informed this research project. Additional titles appear in the Bibliography. The works included in this chapter represent the resources that the researcher found most significant and helpful.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

This chapter reviews the historical, biblical, and theological foundation of the research project. The historical section looks at the overarching topic of spiritual formation for holistic human health. This portion includes discussion of three topics that are specific to the project: weight loss, women's health, and creativity. The biblical section highlights one Old Testament and one New Testament scriptural passage used in *A Journey in Women's Wellness* curriculum: Genesis 1:26-2:3 and Luke 13:10-14. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the theological grounding for healing ministry in the local church.

Historical Foundation

This research project is a study in spiritual formation for holistic human health. The historical foundation for the project begins with a brief explanation of this concept. Humans are spiritual beings living in a physical body. Humans have a brain for thinking and for experiencing emotions. The human self may be described as body, mind, and spirit.

Adrian van Kaam pioneered the Science of Foundational Human Formation, also called Formative Spirituality. He began teaching at Duquesne University in 1954, and there he developed his theories of formation science. He described three spheres of the

human formation field. One sphere, often called the self and described as body, mind, and spirit, encompasses our intrapersonal directives including human biological urges, emotions, and thoughts. Another formation field, the interpersonal sphere, includes human one-to-one relationships. Van Kaam described a third sphere as one's situation, encompassing the various communities to which a person belongs and which impact individuals. Van Kaam described spiritual formation as moving toward consonance with ourselves, with God, and what is best in the world."¹ Instead of "consonance," other writers have used similar terms, including "imitation of Christ" by Thomas a Kempis² and John Wesley's "perfection."³

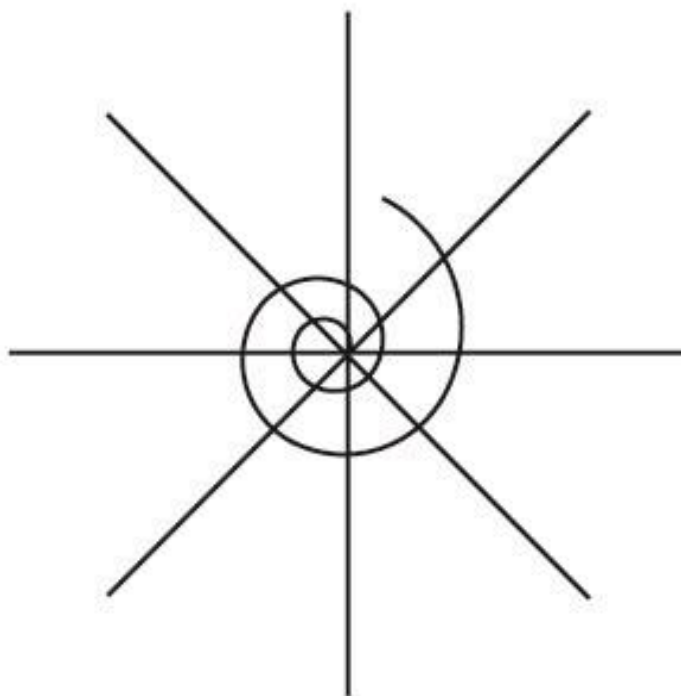
The author views spiritual formation as a portal for overall human health. While Van Kaam conceptualized human formation as three spheres, *A Journey in Women's Wellness* presented a four-fold concept of human health in spirit, mind, body, and relationships, using a diagram created by the researcher which she based upon an equilateral (Greek) cross, symbolizing the Christian doctrine of salvation through Jesus Christ. From the central intersection of the crossbars emanate four rays, each depicting one of the first four components of holistic human health: spirit, mind, body, and relationship. The rays and crossbars total eight lines, symbolizing the eighth day of creation. This phrase expressed the belief that God continues to create beyond the biblical seven days described in the book of Genesis. Inspired by this belief, The Eighth Day Faith Community, a congregation within the tradition of the ecumenical Church of the

¹ Keith Beasley-Topliffe, ed., *The Upper Room Dictionary of Christian Spiritual Formation* (Nashville, TN: Upper Room Books, 2003), 107-110, 282.

² Ibid., 144.

³ Ibid., 216.

Saviour in Washington, D.C., explains, “The eighth day of creation is the life we now lead, one in which we are to be co-creators with God of a reign of justice and compassion as witnesses of Divine Love expressed in Jesus Christ.”⁴ The eighth day of creation is also a phrase which expresses new life in Christ; therefore, the traditional shape of a baptismal font or pool is octagonal. The three-circuit counter-clockwise spiral, originating at the central intersection of the crossbars and rays, symbolizes the Triune God, and depicts the creativity component of life and holistic human health, expressing dynamic growth, regeneration, resurrection, and renewal. All lines of the diagram are open figures, further symbolizing the ongoing process of holistic human health (see below and also Appendix B.)



Cross and Spiral

⁴ Eighth Day Faith Community at inward/outward, http://inwardoutward.org/?page_id=12 (accessed July 4, 2009).

The four-fold concept of holistic human health as spirit, mind, body, and relationship is drawn from the work of James K. Wagner. He presents two helpful diagrams of this four-fold concept, each drawn in the shape of a circle to represent wholeness. The first diagram depicts spirit, mind, body, and relationships equitably, each word equidistant from the center of the circle (see Figure One, Appendix C.) The second diagram places spirit at the center of the circle, signifying that humans are spiritual beings, created in the image of God as described in Genesis 1:26-27. The other three aspects of human wholeness are situated in a triangle around the central importance of spirit (see Figure Two, Appendix C.) In both diagrams, arrows depict the dynamic interaction among the four aspects of holistic health.⁵

The author appreciates Wagner's placement of spirit in the center of the circle and triangle in the second diagram, and agrees that spirit is the most important and central aspect of human wholeness. Therefore, when listing the components of four-fold holistic human health, the author intentionally lists them in the following order: spirit, mind, body, relationships. For use in *A Journey in Women's Wellness*, the researcher designed the cross and spiral diagram using the spiral, rather than arrows, to show the dynamic interaction among the four aspects of human wholeness in spirit, mind, body, and relationships.

The spiral is an archetype, found both in nature and in human artwork since the time of cave dwellers. Spirals symbolize movement, energy, and growth, birth, death, and

⁵ James K. Wagner, *An Adventure in Healing & Wholeness: The Healing Ministry of Christ in the Church Today* (Nashville, TN: Upper Room Books, 1993), 30-34.

resurrection⁶. Therefore, the spiral appeals to the researcher as an appropriate symbol of transformation into increased human well being.

The researcher prefers both of Wagner's models of human wholeness over Van Kaam's concept. Wagner's concept lifts the significance of relationships. One-on-one interpersonal relationships, as well as relationships with groups and larger communities, are of integral importance to both spiritual formation and holistic human health. Relationships are best seen in the same circle or sphere as the other aspects of wholeness. The difference between Wagner's four-fold model of wholeness and Van Kaam's three spheres of human formation points to a significant problem in current popular views regarding holistic human health. An online search for "holistic health" yields a multitude of websites concerned with health as "body, mind, and spirit." Note the order of importance implied in this list. Body is first and foremost. Mind ranks second. Spirit comes third and last. Relationships are nowhere included.

In general, both twenty-first century popular culture views and western medicine consider health in this same ranking. Health and the practice of medicine typically focus on the physical human body. Medical practitioners address symptoms. Treatment of disease and injury usually involves medication and/or surgery.

The legacy of Christianity to the benefit of the world includes a long history of Christian health care. Since antiquity, most hospitals began as mission outreach of the Church to those who were ill and in need of healing. Church-related hospitals and health care facilities continue to accomplish important and needed work

⁶ Mark O'Connell and Raje Airey, *The Complete Encyclopedia of Signs & Symbols*, London, England: Hermes House, an imprint of Anness Publishing Ltd., 2005), 110.

John Wesley, a founder of the Methodist movement in eighteenth century England, was concerned with not only the spiritual health of persons, but also with their physical health. Wesley's ministry included the publication of tracts and sermons. Randy Maddox points out that "Few non-specialists realize that the Wesley publication that has gone through the most editions and reissues is his *Primitive Physick*." ⁷ Maddox further explains that Wesley's theological convictions behind the publication of *Primitive Physick* stress the interrelationship between physical health and spiritual wholeness.⁸ Concerning Wesley's holistic concept of Christian salvation, Maddox concludes, "He was convinced that the Great Physician is committed to the ultimate healing of *both* body and soul, and that some degree of physical recovery is available even in this life—if we will allow it to begin."⁹

Local church congregations are participating in health care. Through intentional healing ministries, clergy and laity partner to restore health and wholeness. *A Journey in Women's Wellness* offers a model of recovery and maintenance of holistic human health in spirit, mind, body, and relationships. While the study included a majority of women who set weight loss goals and succeeded in losing weight, this model was designed to increase women's awareness of health in all four aspects, and to set health goals in each of these four areas of life.

The results of implementation of this model at Mason United Methodist Church indicate that it was transformative for the women who participated. Women lost weight.

⁷ Randy Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology* (Nashville, TN: Kingswood Books, 1994), 146.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid., 147.

They accomplished a diverse array of other health goals. The researcher further hopes that this model may be replicated. By so doing, popular cultural understanding regarding health, wholeness, and well being in spirit, mind, body, and relationships may also gradually become transformed. A desired long-range outcome of this project is that approaches to health care may become more spiritually centered and inclusive of the whole person.

Overweight, Obesity, and Weight Loss

Weight loss was chosen as a focus for this project as a specific example of holistic health recovery. The researcher has a personal history of cycles of weight gain, obesity, and subsequent weight loss and is now maintaining normal weight. Through this journey of significant weight loss in 2008-2009, the researcher gained insight, empathy, and a desire to help obese and overweight women recover their health through appropriate weight loss.

The rate of increase of overweight and obesity in the United States has been termed a crisis. Two-thirds of U.S. adults are now overweight. The obesity rate has increased fifty percent in the past fifty years.¹⁰ The National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute of the National Health Institutes uses three key measures to assess overweight: body mass index (BMI), waist circumference, and risk factors for diseases and conditions associated with obesity. BMI may be obtained by finding the intersection of one's height and weight on the Body Mass Index Table. Normal BMI range is 18.5-24.9. A BMI range of 25.0-29.9 indicates overweight, while 30.0 and above is considered obese. A

¹⁰ David Zinczenko with Matt Goulding, *Eat This, Not That!* (New York, NY: Rodale Inc., 2008), vii.

waist circumference of over forty inches in men and over thirty-five inches in women, regardless of their height or weight, indicates the presence of abdominal fat, placing persons at risk of heart disease and other diseases. Risk factors associated with heart disease include hypertension, high LDL-cholesterol, low HDL-cholesterol, high triglycerides, high blood sugar, family history of heart disease, physical inactivity, and smoking cigarettes. The NHLBI recommends weight loss for obese and overweight persons (BMI over 25) who have two or more of the above risk factors. Losing as little as ten percent of body weight has been shown to decrease the chance of developing high blood pressure, high cholesterol, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, stroke, and certain cancers.¹¹

The mechanics of weight loss are simple: consume fewer calories and burn more calories through daily exercise of thirty minutes or more. However, successful weight loss and maintaining normal BMI and waist circumference are best accomplished as part of the larger picture of achieving health and wholeness in spirit, mind, body, and relationships. Christiane Northrup, M.D., writes that obesity and overweight are sometimes rooted in emotional or physical trauma in the person's past. Unless the health of the whole person is addressed, the cycle of weight loss and recurrent weight gain may not be overcome.¹²

¹¹ National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute. "Information for Patients and the Public." http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/obesity/lose_wt/risk.htm (accesses September 25, 2009).

¹² Christiane Northrup, M.D., *Women's Bodies, Women's Wisdom: Creating Physical and Emotional Health and Healing* (New York, NY: Bantam Books, 1994), 76-91.

Creativity

A curious relationship appears to exist between weight loss and increased creativity. Julia Cameron has taught creative unblocking for more than twenty-five years. As students, many of the writers, attended her twelve week course, she observed that as their creativity increased, they lost weight. In other words, weight loss appeared to be a by-product of creative recovery.¹³ The researcher observed a corollary phenomenon in her own weight loss journey. As she lost weight, she experienced increased creativity as an apparent by-product. The results of this model substantiate the researcher's experience as being typical, not unique. Thirty-eight of the thirty-nine participants in *A Journey in Women's Wellness* reported specific increases in creativity. All the women who lost weight gained creativity. Those who lost weight reported higher creative increase than those women who did not lose weight. Women's weight loss appears to be a driver for increased creativity.

For the purpose of measurement on the post-survey, the researcher defined creativity in terms of eighteen specific behaviors (See Appendix B.) "Creativity" is a rather nebulous term, popularly associated with the visual and performing arts and with writing. Cameron notes that her students sometimes have specific creative longings, such as learning to play the piano, painting, taking an acting class, or writing. Other times her students' goals are more diffuse. She writes, "We hunger for what might be called creative living—an expanded sense of creativity in our business lives, in sharing with our

¹³ Julia Cameron, *The Writing Diet: Write Yourself Right-Size* (New York, NY: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Penguin, 2007), xv.

children, our spouse, our friends.”¹⁴ Cameron defines creativity as “God energy flowing through us, shaped by us, like light flowing through a crystal prism.”¹⁵ She associates creativity with the symbol of the spiral, noting, “We insist on a straight and narrow when the Artist’s Way is a spiral path.”¹⁶ Cameron notes, “I have said before that creativity is a spiritual issue. Any progress is made by leaps of faith, some small and some large.”¹⁷

Like Julia Cameron, Ned Herrmann teaches creativity. However, he defines the word differently. Most of his students are corporate professionals, seeking to become more creative and innovative in their business lives. Herrmann writes, “My own thinking is that creativity in its fullest sense involves both generating an idea and manifesting it—making something happen as a result. To strengthen creative ability, you need to apply the idea in some form that enables both the experience itself and your own reaction and others’ to reinforce your performance. As you and others applaud your creative endeavors, you are likely to become more creative.”¹⁸

Harvard psychologist Howard Gardner has written prolifically regarding Multiple Intelligence Theory. Herrmann’s definition of creativity is consistent with that of Gardner, who writes,

My definition of creativity has revealing parallels with, and differences from, my definition of intelligence. People are creative when they can solve problems, create products, or raise issues in a domain in a way that is essentially novel but is eventually accepted

¹⁴ Julia Cameron, *The Artist’s Way: A Spiritual Path to Higher Creativity* (New York, NY: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Putnam, 1992), 5.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 163.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 183.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 93

¹⁸ Ned Herrmann, *The Creative Brain* (Lake Lure, NC: The Ned Herrmann Group, 1989), 186.

in one or more cultural settings. Similarly, a work is creative if it stands out at first in terms of its novelty but ultimately comes to be accepted within a domain.

The acid test of creativity is simple: In the wake of a putatively creative work, has the domain subsequently been changed?¹⁹

Obstetrician and gynecologist Christiane Northrup perceives creativity from a distinctively woman's perspective, defining it as "womb power," "female birth power," and "the power to conceive, gestate, and give birth to something that grows out of our own substance."²⁰

F. David Peat, author of popular science books, says that although creativity cannot be clearly defined, he finds it helpful to consider three aspects of creativity:

- Making something new, original, or unexpected
- Renewing and sustaining what already exists
- Healing and making things whole²¹

Peat's view appears congruent with the researcher's observations that creativity is integrally connected with holistic human health in spirit, mind, body, and relationships. The creativity component of holistic human health exists in mysterious, perhaps ineffable ways. It appears that as health increases, so does creativity. Likewise, as humans succeed in unblocking their creativity, their overall health increases. The connection between weight loss and increased women's creativity as explored in this research project exemplifies one aspect of this larger field of exploration.

¹⁹ Howard Gardner, *Intelligence Reframed: Multiple Intelligences for the 21st Century* (New York, NY: Perseus Books Group, 1999), 116.

²⁰ Northrup, 442-443.

²¹ F. David Peat, *The Blackwinged Night: Creativity in Nature and Mind* (Cambridge, MA: Perseus Publishing, 2000), 2.

Biblical Foundation

A Journey in Women's Wellness curriculum presented a scripture foundation for each of the six sessions. Three of these texts were drawn from the Gospel of Luke. As a project in spiritual formation, Luke 11:1-4 and 9 was an important text. The disciples asked Jesus, "Lord, teach us to pray." Jesus answered with the words that have become known as The Lord's Prayer. Verse nine then presents the "Ask. Seek. Knock" formula for prayer. The biblical foundation for the last of the six sessions was Luke 9:10-17, in which Jesus instructs the disciples to feed the multitudes.

Two other biblical texts were presented as scripture foundations in the curriculum. These texts are Genesis 1:26-2:3 and Luke 13:10-17. These two scriptures will be reviewed in detail in this chapter, making connections regarding ways in which these two texts inform the research project.

Genesis 1:26-2:3

Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.

So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth." God said, "See, I have given you every plant yielding seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was

very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude. And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation.” (NRSV)

Walter Brueggemann provides essential insights into this text. The genre of this biblical literature is *story*.²² He characterized storytelling as concrete, imaginative, about real people, and done with passion.²³ He further describes the text as “a poetic narrative that likely was formed for liturgical usage.”²⁴ The genre is neither science nor myth, but proclamation, concerned not with method but with God’s intent.²⁵ According to the four source documentary hypothesis of the Hebrew Bible, Genesis 1:26-2:3 comes from the literary source known as Priestly or P source, dating to the exile (587-539 B.C.E.). The earliest written source of the Hebrew Bible is the Yahwist or J source, dating to the time of Solomon (961-922 B.C.E.)²⁶ Contrasting literary sources J and P, Brueggemann comments, “While the former tradition is concerned with prideful self-assertion, the latter deals with despair. Against despair, it asserts not only humanness in the image of God (1:26) but that this image is enduring after the expulsion (5:1) and after the flood (9:6).”²⁷

²² Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis*, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1982), 4.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid., 22.

²⁵ Ibid., 26.

²⁶ Barry Bandstra, *Reading the Old Testament: An Introduction to the Hebrew Bible* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1995), 25-31.

²⁷ Ibid.

One reason the researcher saw this text as foundational for this project involving creativity is that it is a text about creation. Brueggemann writes, “The word ‘creation’ belongs inevitably with the word ‘creator.’ The grammar of these chapters presumes that there is a *Subject* (creator), a *transitive verb* (create) and an *object* (creature/creation). The single sentence, ‘*Creator creates creation,*’ is decisive for everything. It is not subject to inversion.”²⁸ He continues, “The main theme of the text is this: God and God’s creation are bound together in a distinctive and delicate way. This is the presupposition for everything that follows in the Bible. It is the deepest premise from which good news is possible. God and his creation are bound together by the powerful, gracious movement of God towards that creation. The binding which is established by God is inscrutable.”²⁹

Another reason why the researcher turned to this text centers upon Genesis 1:26-27, referring to God creating humankind in God’s image. Knowing that one is created in the image of God is deep good news for persons who are healing and in recovery.

Brueggemann asserts:

Within that critique of every religious to idolatry, our text makes a surprising counter-assertion. There is one way in which God is imaged in the world and only one: humanness! This is the only creature, the only part of creation, which discloses to us something about the reality of God. This God is not known through any cast or molten image. God is known peculiarly through this creature who exists in the realm of history, where power is received, decisions are made, and commitments are honored. God is not imaged in anything fixed but in the freedom of human persons to be faithful and gracious. The contrast between *fixed images* which are prohibited and *human image* which is affirmed represents a striking proclamation about God and about humanness.³⁰

²⁸ Ibid., 16-17.

²⁹ Ibid., 22-24.

³⁰ Ibid., 32.

Janell Johnson observes a message of wholeness and unity within this text. “It is intriguing to suppose that humans living harmoniously in community may be the best way to reflect the divine image in Genesis 1:26-28. Certainly, the idea that all people have been created by God and made in God’s image ought to encourage harmony.”³¹

Claus Westermann concurs with Johnson’s observation of the message of harmony and oneness in the text:

God has created all people “to correspond to him,” that is so that something can happen between creator and creature. This holds, despite all differences among people; it goes beyond all differences of religion, beyond belief and unbelief. Every human being of every religion and every place, even where religions are no longer recognized, has been created in the image of God.³²

W. Sibley Towner suggests that this Genesis text affirms that “We neither are God’s clones nor are we ‘miserable offenders,’ wholly incapable of good. We are God’s creatures and chosen partners in the work of the creation. We are given ever greater opportunity to be bearers of the divine image, that is, positive, responsible stewards in the world, until the day that God makes all things new.”³³

The text closes in Genesis 2:1-3 with the setting aside of the seventh day as Sabbath. These verses are important foundations for this project in spiritual formation for holistic human health, in which the participants are encouraged to live a balanced life of work and rest. Brueggemann explains, “The original Sabbath in Israel was not a day of

³¹ Janell Johnson, “Genesis 1:26-28.” *Interpretation* 59, no. 2 (2005):178.

³² Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1-11: A Commentary* John J. Scullion, trans. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1974), 158.

³³ W. Sibley Towner, “Clones of God: Genesis 1:26-28 and the Image of God in the Hebrew Bible,” *Interpretation* 59, no. 4 (2005):356.

worship but a day of rest.”³⁴ He further emphasizes that during the exilic period, observing the Sabbath set the Israelites apart from the culture around them as an act of faith. Sabbath-keeping was “the announcement of trust in this God who is confident enough to rest.”³⁵ Furthermore, “God does not spend the seventh day in exhaustion but in serenity and peace. In contrast to the gods of Babylon, this God is not anxious about his creation but is at ease with the well-being of his rule.”³⁶ This Genesis text therefore contains a Sabbath model that twenty-first century humans would be wise to follow as a component of wellness and wholeness.

Another detail of this Genesis passage is of interest to the research topic of wellness, including healthy diet. Regarding 1:29-30, “God as a giver provides vegetation to human beings and animals to sustain their lives. When combined with 9:2-3, we discover that human beings were intended to be vegetarians (Isaiah 11:7; 65:25 imply that animals would be herbivorous in the new creation).”³⁷

One more detail of this passage is of particular note. God blesses creation and calls it “good” five times in Genesis chapter one. In verse thirty-one, God calls creation “very good.” Brueggemann comments:

The “good” used here does not refer primarily to a moral quality, but to an aesthetic quality. It might better be translated “lovely, pleasing, beautiful.” The shift from the sixth day to the seventh is perhaps, then, not just that time has run its course, but that God knows satisfaction and delight in what he has wrought. He rests not

³⁴ Brueggemann, 35.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Terence E. Fretheim, *The New Interpreter's Bible* vol. I (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994), 346.

because the week ends, but because there is a satisfying, finished quality in his creation.³⁸

Citing Westermann, he further notes that God's blessing refers to the generative power of life, fertility, and well-being.³⁹ Blessing is significant to the discussion of holistic human health because, as Westermann notes, "...in the Old Testament the concept of 'salvation' includes both blessing and deliverance, that is, God's activity of blessing and of rescuing his people."⁴⁰ Westermann explains that the Latin word for salvation, *salus*, which translates into *Heil* in German, means "whole," "healthy," "intact."⁴¹ Wagner elaborates upon the connection between salvation and healing:

The Greek word *sozo* has several implications and meanings when translated into English. *Sozo* can mean "to save," "to heal," or "to make whole."...Knowing this, we can say that salvation not only means the rescue of the soul or the spirit but also the reality of wholeness wherever brokenness exists. In a sense, the church's total ministry is a healing-saving-wholeness ministry to broken spirits, hearts, minds, relationships, and communities in a broken world.⁴²

The biblical foundations for *A Journey in Women's Wellness* are contained not only in Genesis but also in Luke's Gospel. The author of Luke-Acts expresses God's preference for the least, the last, and the lost. Rick Strelan sees an additional agenda in this Gospel writer. "Luke knew that there were many and various forms of the traditions about Jesus, and he wanted to provide (or to leave) Theophilus with an order that would

³⁸ Brueggemann, 37.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Claus Westermann, *Blessing in the Bible and the Life of the Church*. Keith Crim trans. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968), xv-xvi.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Wagner, 28.

offer a textual stability...Presumably what Luke gives Theophilus is a version arranged in a deliberate order (not simply chronological) which filled a practical and pastoral need.”⁴³

Strelan further sees Luke as a teacher, as evidenced by his frequent reference to Jesus as “Teacher.” He argues, “Luke believes that Jesus is part of God’s renewing of Israel, and teaching is crucial to that role. But not only is Jesus the agent in God’s plan; Luke himself is God’s teaching agent.”⁴⁴ Of particular interest the this project in holistic human health is Luke’s interest in repentance and forgiveness, which Strelan sees as being “at the very heart of the gospel in Luke-Acts.”⁴⁵

Luke 13:10-17

Now he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And just then there appeared a woman with a spirit that had crippled her for eighteen years. She was bent over and was quite unable to stand up straight. When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said, “Woman, you are set free from your ailment.” When he laid hands on her, immediately she stood up straight and began praising God. But the leader of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had cured on the Sabbath, kept saying to the crowd, “There are six days on which work ought to be done; come on those days and be cured, and not on the Sabbath day.” But the Lord answered him and said, “You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger, and lead it away to give it water? And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen long years, be set free from this bondage on the Sabbath day? When he said this, all his opponents were put to shame; and the entire crowd was rejoicing at all the wonderful things that he was doing. (NRSV)

⁴³ Rick Strelan, *Luke the Priest: The Authority of the Author of the Third Gospel* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2008), 36.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 131

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 134.

In approaching this text, Fred Craddock focuses upon the controversy over Jesus healing on the Sabbath. He sees this account primarily as a text that builds tension and foreboding. Craddock comments, “The approaching passion in Jerusalem casts its shadow over this material.”⁴⁶ Craddock notes that the synagogue leader indirectly attacks Jesus and reprimands the people because they came on the Sabbath for healing. Jesus responds directly to the synagogue leader.⁴⁷

The Sabbath controversy of this text connects with the institution of the Sabbath in Genesis 2:1-3. God has blessed the Sabbath for life, regeneration, fertility, and well being. Jesus restores God’s purpose for Sabbath by healing the bent-over woman. The synagogue leader has become entangled in legalism and a power play, losing sight of God’s intent. Concerning this Sabbath controversy, Paul Borgman observes “The good news to the poor, of release from bondage, obeys principle, not rule: Jesus interprets Torah as liberating principle, the religious leaders as restricting rule.”⁴⁸ Frederick Danker asserts, “For [Jesus] the Sabbath day is an especially appropriate time to release this woman. Since she is a daughter of Abraham, the oath sworn to Abraham applied to her; for the Sabbath is emblematic of God’s outreach to his people. It is the climax of God’s creative activity (Gen. 2:1-3) and a day of special blessing for the people (cf. Heb. 4:9-11; Matt. 11:29-30).”⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Fred B. Craddock, *Luke*, Interpretation Series: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1990), 169.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 170.

⁴⁸ Paul Borgman, *The Way According to Luke: Hearing the Whole Story of Luke-Acts* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006), 194.

⁴⁹ Frederick W. Danker, *Jesus and the New Age* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 262.

Craddock also notes that Luke plays on the words *bound* and *loose*:

Jesus loosed the woman from the infirmity in which Satan had bound her. If their law permitted the loosing of a bound (tethered) animal for watering on the Sabbath, should it not be permitted that this woman, not an animal but a freeborn daughter of Abraham, not tethered for a few hours but bound for eighteen years, be loosed from Satan's bond on the Sabbath?⁵⁰

Danker echoes Craddock's observation regarding this wordplay upon the Greek verbs meaning "to untie" (*luo*) and "to bind" (*deo*), commenting, "The woman is entitled to more consideration than an animal. For eighteen years she has been, one might say, in Satan's stall."⁵¹

In contrast to Craddock's emphasis on the Sabbath controversy, James K. Wagner focuses his primary attention on the bent-over woman who was healed by Jesus, and the compassion that Christ had for her.⁵² Wagner comments upon the reference to Satan in the text, explaining that in ancient times, the cause of disabling conditions was linked to evil. He observes, "The healing ministry of Jesus demonstrated again and again that all illness is to be confronted and overcome, regardless of the reasons causing the illness. God's will supports every effort to have healthy bodies, minds, spirits, and relationships."⁵³

R. Alan Culpepper translates the text somewhat differently than Wagner, noting that the Greek *astheneia* may be translated as "a spirit of weakness" or "illness," indicating that Luke leaves the story ambiguous as to the cause of the woman's disability.

⁵⁰ Craddock, 170.

⁵¹ Danker, 262.

⁵² James K. Wagner, *The Spiritual Heart of Your Health: A Devotional Guide on the Healing Stories of Jesus* (Nashville, TN: Upper Room Books, 2002), 44-46.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 46.

Culpepper notes, “Nevertheless, several features of the story suggest that the woman’s condition may be seen as indicative of her diminished status as a woman...As in other scenes in Luke in which Jesus responds to the needs of a woman, this scene points to a new status for women in the kingdom of God.”⁵⁴ Culpepper sees an additional element in this woman’s healing story. “Because of her physical condition, the woman carried shame, but by the end of the story she has been released from her shame and Jesus’ opponents have been shamed. Hers is an honorable standing.”⁵⁵

Culpepper also observes that “Jesus releases the woman from her ailment by a pronouncement and the laying on of hands. The physical act again suggests a further significance. The laying on of hands was normally accompanied by prayer and served as an act of blessing.” This aspect of blessing by the Son of God as a component of the restoration of individual well being echoes God’s blessing of creation in Genesis 1:26-2:3.⁵⁶ Similarly, Wagner notes the significance of Jesus’ touch in this healing story. He writes, “Picture that moment in your mind: This called-out woman inching her way forward, trying to ignore the murmurings of the other people. Then, as a reinforcement of his healing word and as an affirmation to the astonished woman, Jesus physically touches her and instantly she becomes unbent and stands up, praising God.”⁵⁷

The researcher selected this healing story because it implies that the woman was set free from all that blocked and bound her. She was touched and blessed by Jesus. She received healing in spirit, mind, body, relationships, and also creativity, as she responds

⁵⁴ J. Alan Culpepper, *The New Interpreter’s Bible*, vol. IX (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1995), 273.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 274.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 273.

⁵⁷ Wagner, 45.

to healing by immediately praising God. What form did her praise take? Did she sing? Pray? Dance? Praise is a creative act of adoration toward the Creator. This woman's healing story provides inspiration for women undergoing a healing journey today.

Theological Foundation

The bent-over woman of Luke 13:10-17 experienced not only healing but liberation from a condition that had kept her in bondage for eighteen years. Her healing story points to the many forms of spiritual, mental, physical, and relational bondage afflicting women. Although the role and status of women have improved in developing countries during the past half century, in third world and war torn nations, women still suffer at the lowest rung of society. Even in the twenty-first century United States, even in an upper middle class Ohio suburb, women suffer oppression in a still-sexist society. Patriarchy continues to cause brokenness in spirit, mind, body, relationships, and creativity for not only the oppressed but also the oppressor. Feminist theology and spirituality help to inform the foundation of *A Journey in Women's Wellness*.

Feminist spirituality is rooted in the writings of medieval women mystics, including Julian of Norwich, Teresa of Avila, and Mechthild of Magdeburg. In particular, Julian of Norwich experienced Jesus as Mother.⁵⁸ Centuries later, in an essay published in 1960, Valerie Saiving heralded the feminist movement as she defined women's sin:

The temptations of woman *as woman* are not the same as the temptation of man *as man*, and the specifically feminine forms of sin...have a quality which can never be encompassed by such terms as "pride" and "will-to power." They are better suggested by such items as triviality, distractibility and diffuseness; lack of an organizing center or focus; dependence on others for one's own

⁵⁸ Beasley-Topliffe, 104-105.

self-definition; tolerance at the expense of standards of excellence; inability to respect the boundaries of privacy; sentimentality, gossipy sociability and mistrust of reason—in short, underdevelopment or negation of the self.⁵⁹

Beginning in the 1970's Rosemary Radford Ruether, Phyllis Trible, Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, and other scholars exposed the damaging effects of male-dominated biblical interpretation and the societal impact of patriarchy.⁶⁰

Feminist spirituality stands in opposition to the early Christian dichotomy of spirit and body, which understood Christian salvation as freeing the spirit from the prison of the body. Feminists understand the body as the location of the spirit. Rejecting this ancient Greek-inspired dualism, feminists see the interconnectedness of all things. Keywords of this viewpoint include integration, bonding, weaving, and holism.⁶¹ This research project is based upon the concept of spiritual formation for holistic human health. Dualism is the opposite of holism.

Feminist scholars have been helpful in bringing insight into the Genesis 1:26-27 image of God text. Ruether's 1989 paper, "*Imago Dei*, Christian Tradition and Feminist Hermeneutics" briefly surveys the concept of the human as image of God or analogous to God.⁶² Six years earlier, Ruether wrote, "The critical principle of feminist theology is the

⁵⁹ Owen C. Thomas and Ellen K. Wondra, *Introduction to Theology*, 3rd ed. (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 2002), 149.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 104.

⁶¹ Ibid., 105.

⁶² Kari Elisabeth Borresen, ed., *The Image of God: Gender Models in Judaeo-Christian Tradition* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1995), 267-291.

promotion of the full humanity of women. Whatever denies, diminishes, or distorts the full humanity of women is, therefore, appraised as not redemptive.”⁶³ She argues:

The naming of males as norms for authentic humanity has caused women to be scapegoated for sin and marginalized in both original and redeemed humanity. This distorts and contradicts the theological paradigm of *imago dei*/Christ. Defined as male humanity against or above women, as ruling-class humanity above servant classes, the *imago dei*/Christ paradigm becomes an instrument of sin rather than a disclosure of the divine and an instrument of grace.⁶⁴

Patricia D. Brown expresses thoughts regarding the image of God in a motherly feminist voice:

There seems to be a distortion in what some call original sin/redemption theology. This theology ignores the fact that we are created in the image of a God of love. My children are created in God’s image. As a mother, holding them in my arms in their first moments of life, I knew they were not enemies of the world. They were not sinful, in the classic use of the word, but children of God, children of love. They would become sinners only as they interacted with the world and failed to take responsibility for their own actions.⁶⁵

Mary Catherine Hilbert adds this additional thought to the discussion of *imago Dei* as it applies to this project in women’s spiritual formation for holistic human health:

Women’s *bodily experiences*, including pregnancy, birthing, nursing, and nurturing a child, are all used by biblical writers and classic figures in the Christian tradition as well as contemporary theologians and preachers to image the God who created humankind in the divine image, both female and male.⁶⁶

⁶³ Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1983), 18-19.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 19-20.

⁶⁵ Patricia D. Brown, *Learning to Lead from Your Spiritual Center* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996), 37.

⁶⁶ Mary Catherine Hilbert, *Naming Grace: Preaching and the Sacramental Imagination* (New York, NY: Continuum, 2005), 174.

Andrew Sung Park confronts patriarchy by naming this sin as a major root of han.⁶⁷ He defines han as “the collapsed pain of the heart due to psychosomatic, interpersonal, social, political, economic, and cultural oppression and repression. The reality of han is the emotional, rational, and physical suffering of pain rooted in the anguish of the victim.”⁶⁸ Park suggests a methodology for the healing of han in the church.⁶⁹ This methodology is congruent with concepts taught in *A Journey in Women’s Wellness*. Park’s theology of the wounded, with emphasis on healing at the individual, community, and structural levels, provides rich resources for ministries of healing and wholeness. Humans who have been oppressed, victimized, and sinned against carry these deep wounds in the spirit-mind-body-relational-creative self. Healing, wholeness, and well being may be possible as individuals and communities are allowed to acknowledge their wounds and grow toward forgiveness.

⁶⁷ Andrew Sung Park, *The Wounded Heart of God: The Asian Concept of Han and the Christian Doctrine of Sin* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1993), 50-60.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 16-17.

⁶⁹ Andrew Sung Park, *Racial Conflict & Healing: An Asian-American Theological Perspective* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996), 145-159.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

Hypothesis

The research hypothesis tested was that intentional weight loss, plus engagement in spiritual formation curriculum focused upon holistic human health as part of Christian congregational ministry, yields increased overall human wellness and wholeness, specifically including gain in creativity.

Intervention

In addition to testing the above hypothesis, the researcher sought to achieve three major objectives through the implementation of this project at Mason United Methodist Church. These goals were first, that participants would learn about holistic human health through spiritual formation curriculum emphasizing experiential learning authored by the researcher; second, that participants would experience positive change in their health, with intentional weight loss as one of several reportable wellness indicators; and third, that participants would discover reportable increased creativity in their lives. In other words, the researcher's three-fold purpose in conducting this project was to help women learn how to increase their health in spirit, mind, body, and relationships, to achieve increased well being over the duration of the project, and to experience increased creativity in their lives.

Implementation of the project began with gathering a projected fifty female adult participants. The invitation was to participate in *A Journey in Women's Wellness*, a six-session small group experience, beginning September 19, 2009 and ending October 31, 2009 on Saturday mornings from 9:00 to 11:00 A.M. in the multi-ministry room of Mason United Methodist Church in Mason, Ohio. Recruitment strategies for gathering the participants included announcements in church print and electronic communications media, a sign-up sheet posted in the Narthex, and person-to-person invitation. Registration was open to both members and non-members of the congregation. Participants were informed that *A Journey in Women's Wellness* is a curriculum being developed by the researcher in partial fulfillment of academic requirements for the Doctor of Ministry degree at United Theological Seminary. Participants were also advised that they would be asked to complete several surveys during the six weeks, and that the researcher might contact them after October 31, 2009 to gather additional data. (See Appendix A for entire curriculum.)

The six two-hour group sessions followed a similar pattern. Weekly components included a scripture foundation for the session; a spiritual formation exercise from Christian tradition; a “herstory of the week” thumbnail sketch featuring a woman who has been a positive influence in spiritual formation and holistic human health; experiential learning activities, including several from traditions beyond Western Christianity; goal setting and group support building; and closing moments of prayer and blessing. Session One included anointing with oil during closing worship. Session Six included The Sacrament of Holy Communion.

The weekly scripture foundations were:

- Session One – “Lord, teach us to pray.” Luke 11:1-4 and 11:9 (The Message)
- Session Two – “Give us each day our daily bread.” Luke 11:1-4 and 11:9 (NRSV); “Taste and see the goodness of the Lord.” Psalm 34:8
- Session Three – “Forgive us our sins, for we forgive everyone who does us wrong. And do not bring us to hard testing.” Luke 11:4 (Good News Bible)
- Session Four – “So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them.” Genesis 1:26-2:3 (NRSV)
- Session Five – Jesus Heals the Bent-over Woman: Luke 13:10-14 (NRSV, KJV, and The Message)
- Session Six – The Feeding of 5,000: Luke 9:10-17 (NRSV)

The Gospel of Luke formed the scripture foundation for five of the six sessions.

The researcher chose the Lukan version of the scriptural base for The Lord’s Prayer to establish the foundation for the sessions during the first three weeks. Each of these sessions focused upon a different theme found within Luke 11:1-4 and 11:9. The theme “Lord, teach us to pray” in Session One established the foundation of prayer for the group experience, corresponding to the spiritual dimension of holistic human health. “Give us this day our daily bread” in Session Two pointed towards the physical, embodied aspect of health and wholeness. In Session Three the Luke 11 scripture focus was upon forgiveness and its significance to healthy human relationships. Session Five featured Luke 13:10-14, a healing encounter between Jesus and a long-suffering, bent over woman that invites imaginative speculation concerning her spiritual, mental, physical, and relational health. Session Six was constructed upon Luke 9:10-17, not only because it

deals with the physical feeding of a multitude of hungry humans, but also because this scripture narrates an example of followers of Christ using their gifts for ministry in miraculous ways for the good of many. The two scriptures used in the curriculum from beyond The Gospel of Luke were Genesis 1:26-2:3 and Psalm 34:8. The researcher used this Genesis text to ground the project in the concept of *imago Dei*, that humans are created in the likeness and image of God the Creator. Scripture says that both Creator and creation are very good. Similarly, Psalm 34:8 was used with the intent that the participants would enjoy the two-fold sensory impression of both seeing and tasting God in the midst of experiential learning about healthy nutrition, and that they would know and remember that God is good.

Spiritual formation exercises for each session:

- Session One – Meditation on the Heart’s Longing: a variation on Lectio Divina
- Session Two – Breath Prayer
- Session Three – Body Prayer
- Session Four – Scripture Reflection with Art and Music
- Session Five – Scripture Reflection through Table Conversation
- Session Six – “Here I Am” Prayer from Anthony Bloom

Featured women from “herstory”:

- Session One – Julian of Norwich, 1342-ca.1423
- Session Two – Susanna Wesley, 1669-1742
- Session Three – Roberta C. Bondi, born 1941
- Session Four – Hildegard of Bingen, 1098-1179
- Session Five – Patricia D. Brown, born 1953

- Session Six – Gertrude of Helfta, 1256-1302

Each of these women is a teacher of Christian spiritual formation. Together, their lives span more than 900 years of Christian faith and tradition. They were featured in the curriculum because their life and work are grounded and centered in Christian spiritual formation. In addition, their legacy includes teaching holistic human health in spirit, mind, body, relationship, and creativity.

Most of the six sessions featured special presenters who facilitated experiential learning activities related to holistic well being. The presenters and their topics were:

- Session One – Jane Zopff, Harp Music for Meditation
- Session Two – Susan Evans, Tai Chi; Jackie Marshall, Nutrition
- Session Three – Bryn Brock, Healing Touch Spiritual Ministry; Jay and Phyllis Nesselroad, Drumming Circle
- Session Four – Erin Kelley, Dance; Sonya Miller-Kravetz, Qigong
- Session Five – Cindy Ware, Ojo de Dios Mandalas
- Session Six – Michelle Elghayesh, Belly Dancing

One additional presenter, Beth Tysl, was originally scheduled to teach an introduction to yoga during Session Five but cancelled due to illness. The researcher amended Session Five accordingly. The revised version of Session Five is included in Appendix A.

Throughout the six sessions, the researcher included learning experiences that would emphasize the interconnectedness of the human spirit, mind, body, relationships, and creativity. Presentations were planned to include diverse learning styles, interests, and goals among the group participants. Diverse physical abilities were also taken into account. While several activities, including dance, Tai Chi, and Qigong, involved

standing and full body movement, other learning experiences were designed for the participants to be seated. Inclusion of activities featuring the arts was intentional and designed to evoke creativity in the participants through the experience of music, drumming, dance, and the visual and tactile art of making an Ojo de Dios Mandala. In addition to the above learning experiences, during the group sessions the researcher facilitated arts engagement including singing, listening to recorded music for meditation, and coloring mandalas.

A major portion of Session One invited the participants to identify their own strengths and weaknesses in the areas of spiritual, mental, physical, and relational health. They did so by grouping themselves in the appropriate quadrants of a large equilateral cross taped to the floor. Women were asked to exchange contact information with the others who desired to set goals and to grow in a particular area of holistic human health.

Session Two focused upon nutrition and making healthy food choices. Participants were introduced to health risk information, including body mass index (BMI), significance of waist circumference, and other risk factors and conditions associated with obesity. All participants were asked to weigh themselves and record weekly changes, whether they set a goal for intentional weight loss or not. Participants were asked to locate their height and weight on a Body Mass Index Table, and identify their weight as normal, overweight, obese, or extremely obese. Blood pressure checks were taken and recorded. Participants recorded this data on their Health Surveys (see Appendix B.)

Session Three focused upon forgiveness and its importance in growing healthy relationships with God, self, and others. Healing Touch Spiritual Ministry, a complementary medical modality, was one of the featured presentations. The presenter

taught the basic ideas of energy work in the human body. Administering Healing Touch to a client has been known to decrease stress and release areas of energy flow blockage in the human body. The drumming circle afforded an opportunity for participants to safely release emotion through the creation of music.

Session Four introduced the concept of the mandala, an archetype or universal symbol. Participants colored paper mandalas with crayons and markers while listening to the music of Hildegard of Bingen. The mandala activity provided participants an opportunity to engage in creating visual art. Additionally, working with mandalas reinforced the concept of wholeness, that humans are spirit, mind, body, relational, creative beings. The participants received additional information about nutrition and Traditional Chinese Medicine. A presenter led the group in Qigong exercises.

Session Five featured the experience of creating woven Ojo de Dios mandalas, building upon the teaching from Session Four. Additional teaching regarding the seven specific energy centers of the body known as chakras was presented. This session focused upon the relational aspect of holistic human health, and how our relationships can make us sick or well.

Session Six was a wrap-up and celebration. Belly Dancing was a fun and freeing activity. After completing and returning the post-survey, the participants engaged in a reflection discussion session. The session concluded with celebration of The Sacrament of Holy Communion.

Research Design

The research design employed mixed methods. Surveys administered during the project implementation included some quantitative aspects so as to identify participants who lost weight, as well as those whose creativity increased. The surveys also yielded qualitative data concerning the informational and transformational learning that took place in the lives of the participants.

The researcher gathered thirty-nine women who attended one or more of the six sessions. The invitation to the group did not include either the words “weight loss” or “creativity.” The researcher wanted the participants to include women who desired to lose weight, as well as women for whom weight loss was not an issue. The researcher refrained from using the word “creativity” in the invitation so as not to telegraph the demand characteristic.

The inspiration for the project arose from the researcher’s personal experience of increased creativity during a season of weight loss. The researcher became curious to learn if this phenomenon were an anomaly, or if other women who lost weight might also experience increased creativity. The researcher wondered, “What drives women’s creativity? What blocks creativity? What is the relationship between weight loss and creativity?”

The researcher considered structuring the project methodology in accord with the branch of qualitative research known as heuristic research, in which the researcher remains at the center of the research, studying a question of personal concern. However, after reading more about the structure of heuristic research, the researcher discerned that the research questions were no longer about testing a personal phenomenon. The research questions were about how a group of women might respond and potentially benefit from

engagement with spiritual formation curriculum focused upon holistic human health.

Once the researcher reached the implementation phase of the project, the research emphasis was about the participants. The researcher's own story merely initiated the development of the project, and did not need to be part of the results of the study. It was the women's stories of what happened to their lives that was important.

The project was also about the church. This study was an experiment regarding how well the local church might serve as an incubator for women's well being and creativity. Rooted and grounded in Western Christian scripture, doctrine, history, and tradition, this project also included ideas and experiences from Asian and Middle Eastern cultures and from non-Christian sources. Would such ideas be accepted by a Christian congregation? Would the participants enjoy these activities? Would their health and creativity benefit from them?

Measurement

Data was gathered using a series of surveys that were administered at Sessions One, Two, Three and Six. The surveys included both closed and open-ended questions about holistic health in spirit, mind, body, and relationships, and about changes in the participants' creativity. The questions were designed to gather both nominal and ordinal data, as the researcher sought to learn about the participants' experiences and know the story of what they learned and how they changed during their *Journey in Women's Wellness*.

Instrumentation

All surveys were designed by the researcher, with input from Contextual Associates. See Appendix B.

The purpose of the surveys included:

- To gather qualitative data concerning the participants' holistic wellness in spirit, mind, body, and relationships at the beginning and end of the six sessions of the class
- To identify those participants who set a weight loss goal
- To identify those participants who lost weight
- To gather qualitative data concerning the participants' self-assessment of changes in creativity during the six sessions of the class
- To gather data that could be used by the researcher to assess possible correlations between weight loss and creativity increase
- To gather data to assess what significant learnings the participants had integrated and implemented in their lives

This model was designed to test how engagement in spiritual formation curriculum focused upon holistic human health may yield increased overall wellness and wholeness, with a specific interest in the relationship between weight loss and an increase in creativity. To make this assessment, the researcher designed a set of eighteen questions on the post survey dealing with specific kinds of creative expression. Additional survey questions yielded significant responses to open-ended queries.

CHAPTER FIVE

FIELD EXPERIENCE

The project, a curriculum written by the researcher and titled *A Journey in Women's Wellness*, took place in six learning group sessions over a seven-week period in fall 2009. Group sessions took place from 9:00 to 11:00 A.M. in the multi-ministry room at Mason United Methodist Church in Mason, Ohio. Registration was open to women age twenty-one and over. Session One took place Saturday, September 19, 2009. Group sessions were held weekly, with the exception of October 17, 2009, due to a major annual event held in the church. The sixth and final group session was held October 31, 2009, seven weeks after the first gathering of the group.

A total of forty-six women registered for *A Journey in Women's Wellness*. Thirty-five of these registrants were members or regular worship attendees at Mason United Methodist Church. The other nine women responded to personal invitation from another participant. Seven of the forty-six registrants did not attend any sessions. All cited a busier than expected fall schedule as the reason for non-attendance. Thirty-nine women attended one or more sessions. Thirty-two of these thirty-nine participants returned post-surveys. Seven of the thirty-nine participants were Contextual Associates. As members of the project design team, these seven women were aware of the hypothesis being tested. The other thirty-two participants were not told that a desired outcome of the project was increased creativity.

Collection of Data

Data was collected through the administration of four surveys (See Appendix B.) “Survey As We Begin Our Wellness Journey – 9/19/09” was administered at Session One. This pre-survey consisted of seventeen questions, sixteen of which were open-ended. The remaining question asked participants to rate their current level of stress on a scale of one to ten. This survey also asked the participant’s year of birth. *A Journey in Women’s Wellness* curriculum encouraged participants to think of holistic human health as spiritual, mental, physical, and relational wellness; therefore, the pre-survey questions were explicitly grouped into these four areas of health. Four additional questions addressed the issue of stress, what attracted them to this group, and participant’s expectations of how they might benefit from the class. The pre-survey was designed to help participants think about the current state of their own health. The answers helped the researcher obtain insights into the range of health issues with which the group was dealing.

“Survey – Session 2 – September 26, 2009” was administered at the beginning of the second class session. It consisted of five closed questions, designed to evoke additional health self-assessment from the participants regarding their well being in spirit, mind, body, and relationships. This instrument also included one question about the participant’s frequency of engagement in a hobby, leisure, or creative activity.

“My Health Statistics” was introduced at Session Two on September 26, 2009. This instrument asked for participants to record the following data:

- Height
- Weight
- Waist measurement

- Blood pressure
- Body Mass Index
- Height/Weight Chart Category (normal, overweight, obese)

Participants were asked to keep this instrument throughout the class sessions and record their weight weekly each Saturday. The other measurements were taken on September 26 and October 31, 2009. This survey was handed in to the researcher at the final session on October 31, 2009. Participants' change in weight, if any, on this survey became part of the assessment of data. The other numbers were used as a teaching tool, rather than data that the researcher used to support the hypothesis.

A third survey was administered at Session Three on October 3, 2009. It consisted of four questions regarding the participants' emotional health, stress level, engagement in hobbies and creative activities, and relationships.

The fourth survey, "Session 6 Survey," was the post-survey administered at the last session on October 31, 2009. It consisted of twenty-four closed and open-ended questions concerning changes in wellness from September 19 to October 31, 2009, regarding spirit, mind, body, relationships and creativity.

Analysis of Data

Of the thirty-nine women who attended one or more of the six class sessions, thirty-two returned post-surveys. Of the seven women who did not return post-surveys, four attended only one class session. Three women attended two class sessions. One of these participants returned a post-survey, while the other two did not. Four of the five women

who attended three class sessions returned post-surveys. All participants who attended four or more sessions returned post-surveys.

The researcher used the post-survey data to gather the following information concerning reported weight loss among the participants:

- Who set a weight loss goal
- Who set a goal and lost weight
- Who lost weight, even though they did not report setting a weight loss goal
- How many pounds were lost by each individual
- How many total pounds were lost by the group
- The range of weight loss by the group
- The average (mean) weight loss per person
- The most frequently reported (mode) weight loss per person

Post-survey Question Fifteen listed eighteen possible expressions of increased creativity. Respondents were asked to check all that applied to their experience of change from September 19 to October 31, 2009. These responses, coupled with the data regarding weight loss, were used to suggest correlations between weight loss and creativity. Data gleaned from other survey responses dealing with spiritual, mental, physical, and relational health were assessed to help build a profile of change in health that occurred within the group during the seven weeks of participation in *A Journey in Women's Wellness*. In testing the hypothesis that intentional weight loss, plus engagement in spiritual formation curriculum focused upon holistic human health as part of Christian congregational ministry, yields increased overall human wellness and

wholeness, specifically including gain in creativity, the researcher focused upon data that would answer the following questions:

- What weight loss occurred?
- In what ways did women's creativity increase?
- In what ways did women's overall wellness and wholeness increase?

Outcome

Regarding weight loss, of the thirty-two respondents:

- Fifteen women specified weight loss as a goal and reported the number of pounds lost
- Two women specified weight loss as a goal, but did not report the number of pounds lost. They left this answer, Question Fifteen on the post-survey, blank. They also left blank the response "I have lost weight" in Question Thirteen. The researcher interpreted their responses as indicating that they did not lose weight.
- Four women did not specify weight loss as a goal, but reported pounds lost. They reported physical wellness goals including "exercise more;" "eat better," and weight loss was an added benefit.
- Therefore, a total of nineteen of the thirty-two respondents reported pounds lost.
- Eleven women did not specify weight loss as a goal, and reported zero pounds lost. They were of normal weight.
- Total pounds reported lost by the nineteen women who lost weight during the study: 87.5
- Range of weight loss among the group: From one to fifteen pounds per person

- The average (mean) weight loss per person: 5.83 pounds
- The most frequently reported (mode) weight loss per person: nine out of nineteen women reported a loss of 3.0 pounds

The results listed above indicate that the group of thirty-two respondents, nineteen (59.4%) lost weight and thirteen (40.6%) did not. Most weight loss authorities recommend losing one half to one pound per week for healthy, long-term weight loss. Both the mean of 5.83 pounds and the mode of 3.0 pounds are consistent with this rule of thumb.

Regarding increased creativity, the thirty-two respondents reported:

- Thirty-one participants (96.9% of the respondents) experienced increased creativity in one or more of the eighteen examples listed on the post-survey
- One participant did not report increased creativity, did not specify weight loss as a goal, and reported no weight loss. This participant had major surgery during the seven weeks of the study.
- Of the nineteen women who lost weight, the average (mean) number of creativity responses checked on the post-survey was 5.0
- Of the thirteen women who did not lose weight, the average (mean) number of creativity responses checked on the post-survey was 3.3
- Results indicate that the women who lost weight experienced greater increase in creativity than the women who did not lose weight.
- Results suggest a possible correlation between number of pounds lost and degree of increase of creativity reported. A woman who reported 15.0

pounds lost (the “biggest loser”) also checked the greatest number of creativity increase responses, twelve out of eighteen. Similarly, the participant who lost the third greatest number of pounds, 8.0, affirmed the second greatest number of creativity responses, ten out of eighteen.

The good news is that these results support the research hypothesis. It appears that among this group of women, weight loss may have been a driver in increasing their creativity. The even better news, which further relates to the hypothesis, is that weight loss is not the only change driver for either increased women’s well being or for increased creativity that may be observed among this group of women. The women who did not report weight loss but nevertheless experienced higher than average scores for creativity increase also reported significant increased well being in one or more areas of holistic human health in spirit, mind, body, and relationships.

The researcher observed that among women who lost weight, the increase of creativity is not necessarily proportional. For example, four women who reported above average increase in creativity each lost three pounds, the weight loss most frequently reported by the group. This data suggests that a modest, healthy weight loss of one-half pound a week or less over a period of seven weeks may be enough to help trigger both increased holistic well being and increased creativity. The results of this study lend support to the hypothesis that intentional weight loss, plus engagement in spiritual formation curriculum focused upon holistic human health as part of Christian congregational ministry, yields increased overall human wellness and wholeness, specifically including gain in creativity.

In addition to supporting the hypotheses, the results of the post-survey indicate that the researcher's teaching objectives were met by the group:

- Participants reported significant learning about holistic human health through the group experience of engagement with the spiritual formation curriculum *A Journey in Women's Wellness* written by the researcher.
- Participants reported positive change in their health, with intentional weight loss as one of several reportable wellness indicators reflecting health and wholeness in spirit, mind, body, and relationships. The wellness of the group increased during the seven weeks of the group experience from September 19 to October 31, 2009.
- Participants reported increased creativity in their lives.

All participants reported that they learned how to be healthier in spirit, mind, body, and relationship. All participants reported increased well being in one or more aspects of holistic human health in spirit, mind, body, and relationships. All participants reported progress toward achievement of one or more of their wellness goals. Nearly all the women (88%) who wanted to lose weight achieved that goal. In the process of gaining health and wholeness, participants reported increased creativity. The women in the group reported that they enjoyed this process of not only informational but also transformational learning. Beyond the statistics regarding weight loss and creativity, the research instruments yielded considerable additional insights concerning the participants' learning experience.

The Wellness Journey

The thirty-nine women who gathered to participate in *A Journey in Women's Wellness* ranged from twenty-eight to seventy-seven years of age, a forty-nine-year span from eldest to youngest. The pre-survey administered at Session One also reflects a wide range of health history and concerns at the beginning of the class regarding the participants' spiritual, mental, physical, and relational health. Examples appear below:

Spiritual Wellness

- “Lonely, looking for spiritual community.”
- “Need to grow closer to God, even though I attend church.”
- “Learning.”
- “I have a strong spiritual life.”
- “Good and getting better every day.”
- “Back in the fold.”
- “Moving forward, continuing to learn scripture. Need to work on more quiet time daily, consistently.”
- “Continuous journey.”
- “Spiritual health is good, but sense of community is lacking.”
- “Better lately, because of getting involved with church.”
- “Good. Always trying to remain open to what God calls me to do and be to allow God's Kingdom to come on earth.”
- “I pray a lot, but not on a schedule. I talk to God a lot.”
- “It is a wonderful journey filled with joy, tears, surprises, challenges.”

- “I believe I have a good spiritual relationship with my God, but I’m always looking to build a closer feeling of oneness.”
- “Healthy but always seeking improvement.”
- “Not as strong as I would like. I experience doubt. It’s tough dealing with grief and illness.”
- “There’s always room for improvement, but I’m comfortable.”
- “I’m feeling disconnected a bit with God.”
- “I have good intentions but am failing miserably.”
- “I’m feeling a close relationship with God. I feel his love and presence in my life.
- “Good at times. Weak at times.”
- “I have been making concrete effort to rise earlier allowing for time for daily devotions.”
- “Spiritually well but constantly sad at the loss of my spouse.”
- “Spirit grounds me and feeds me moment by moment.”
- “Questioning.”
- “Relying on Dad.”

Mental Wellness

Participants were asked to list what they do to keep their mind active, as well as their current hobbies as two of several indicators of mental well being. The interests they listed are diverse, including:

- Activism

- Travel
- Shopping
- Reading
- Music
- Crochet
- Walking
- Cooking
- Learning about art
- Exploring new places
- Gardening
- Cards
- Crafts
- Golf
- Dance
- Flying
- Movies
- Theatre
- Scrap booking
- Sewing
- Quilting
- Conversation
- Knitting
- Memorize music

- Painting
- Research
- Writing
- Horseback riding
- Doll houses
- Cross stitch
- Antiquing
- Journaling
- Bird watching
- Home improvement projects
- Skiing
- Exercise
- Bike riding
- Yoga
- Game playing
- Refinishing furniture
- Sudoku
- Crossword
- Watch “Jeopardy”
- Meditate
- Engage in deep spiritual/theological discussion
- Computer games

Several respondents listed hobbies that are also indicators of relational wellness, including playing with grandchildren, volunteering, helping others, fellowship with family and friends, staying in touch with others, and caring for a pet.

Some surveys reflect a lack of hobbies and interests. A few participants noted that they have never had hobbies, or that work is their hobby. Others listed hobbies that they used to enjoy, but their current life does not include.

Physical Wellness

The physical health of the women in the group tended to fall into two extremes. While many of the women have experienced numerous health challenges, many others listed no health problems. Similarly, a large number of the women listed many prescription medications that they are currently taking regularly, while many others take no medications at all. The range of illnesses, injuries, and surgeries that the women reported includes:

- Rheumatic fever
- Joint replacement
- Diabetes
- Carpal Tunnel
- Brain trauma
- Back problems, back surgeries
- Broken bones
- Osteoporosis
- High cholesterol

- High blood pressure
- Cancer
- Hysterectomies, other OB/GYN issues
- Arthritis
- Menopausal symptoms
- Eye disease and vision problems
- Allergies
- Hair loss
- Shoulder injuries and surgeries
- Asthma
- Sciatica
- Depression and anxiety
- Degenerative disc disease
- Acid reflux
- Aging
- Gall bladder disease and surgeries
- Shingles
- Neuropathy
- Thyroid problems
- Fibromyalgia
- Overweight and obesity

Relationship Wellness

The pre-survey asked the participants to list any challenging relationship issues they were currently facing. Their responses included:

- How to accept children's choices and way of life
- Grief over loss of loved ones through death, estrangement, abandonment, alienation, separation, divorce
- Getting established in community after relocation
- Specific family members named by respondents
- Keeping calm on the home front
- Alcoholic/drug abuser in family
- Single parenting
- Neighbors
- Aging parents
- Desire to meet people with similar interests, especially locally
- Bosses, co-workers, employees
- Children growing up and leaving home for college, career, military
- Children, especially raising teenagers
- Feeling a lack of connection with others
- Abusive relationships
- Giving too much to others, not enough to self
- Learning to like others that I find difficult to like

Nine of the women responded that they were not currently facing relationship challenges. However, on a subsequent pre-survey question asking participants to name their biggest source of stress, three of these women named a specific person, indicating that their major stress resulted from a relationship issue.

Survey Check-ups Along the Journey

A brief survey that required participants to simply make a check mark to rate themselves in their self-assessment of their health in spirit, mind, body, and relationships was administered at Session Two on September 26, 2009 and another at Session Three on October 3, 2009. The purpose of these surveys was two-fold. First, the researcher was puzzled by the answers received on the September 19, 2009 pre-survey question asking the women to rate their current stress level from one to ten. It appeared possible that some of the respondents had misread the scale, as the question yielded many answers reflecting a stress-free life, which was incongruent with the open-ended questions on the pre-survey which indicated that these same women were dealing with significant stress. Therefore, as a validation check, the September 26, 2009 survey asked the women to rate their stress level using a different scale. These results were consistent with the responses to the open-ended questions on the pre-survey of September 19, 2009. Second, the researcher used these brief surveys as a teaching tool to help the women be mindful of the four areas of holistic human health as spirit, mind, body, and relationship, and to suggest healthy behaviors in these four areas.

By Session Three on October 3, 2009, evidence of healing and transformation in some of the women began to appear. For example, in an after-session conversation with

the researcher, one participant, age forty-six, remarked, “Since I started coming to this class, I feel like I’m recovering who I am. I feel like I want to play the piano again.” I inquired whether she had a piano. She replied, “Yes, I have a beautiful piano in my home I haven’t touched in fifteen years. And I want to dance again!” She shared that she was a classically trained dancer from age thirteen to twenty-eight. She felt that being part of *A Journey in Women’s Wellness* was making a positive difference in her life. She went on to lose the greatest number of pounds in the group, as well as to report the greatest increase in creativity.

Where the Journey Took the Group

Two questions in particular on the post-survey, Questions Sixteen and Question Twenty-three, provided means for the researcher to assess a summary of what the women learned from their engagement with this wellness group. On these two questions, the researcher found no significant differences between the responses of the women who lost weight and those who did not.

Question Sixteen asked, “How did you benefit from *A Journey in Women’s Wellness*?” The responses to this question tended to cluster around six themes: spiritual benefits; self-assessment, self-understanding, focus, and desire to change; learning ideas and experiences about wellness and wholeness; stress relief and nutrition information; women’s group support and building relationships; and creative benefits.

Spiritual Benefits

- “I felt closer to God.”
- “I gained awareness of other forms of spirituality.”

Self-assessment, Self-understanding, Focus, and Desire to Change

- “I learned to stop and assess my physical and spiritual wellness, to address the problem areas, not just keep going and ignore them.”
- “The classes helped me focus myself more on God and my family, which in turn makes me the most happy and centered.”
- “I have a better understanding of what matters in my life.”
- “It has helped me focus on things that I knew I needed to change for myself.”
- “I have become aware of where I am and have tools to get to where I need to be.”

Learning Ideas and Experiences about Wellness and Wholeness

- “I benefited greatly. I have been given a taste of different types of wellness that I didn’t know about before and would like to explore, including Tai Chi and Belly Dancing. I found new ways to pray. I gained nutritional information.”
- “New learning and awareness in balancing and enjoying my life.”
- “Loved learning about new things and trying new things, such as Tai Chi and drumming. I always love reinforcing good lifestyle habits!”
- “It exposed me to programs that I did not know about before.”
- “I spent time each week thinking about wellness.”

- “It was such a great introduction to and awareness of all the healthy avenues available!”
- “I enjoyed the varieties of experiences, many of which I had not experienced before. Also, I left each session with a lot to think about—even though I also felt very peaceful. It was a balance of excitement and peacefulness.”
- “I looked forward to coming to an uplifting spiritual and physical activity on busy Saturdays and gave up my support group [schedule conflict] with no regrets.”
- “It made me more aware of my body, rhythms, and different ways to express myself.”
- “Body, mind, and spirit became more meaningful.”
- “I have been introduced to ways to connect with God’s universal energy (that work!) that have never been presented to me before. Some practices are thousands of years old and practiced across cultures. Our (America’s) ‘western’ thought process is not the ‘best way to do things!’”

Stress Relief and Nutrition Information

- “Learning how to de-stress; how to develop a calming center; refocusing on eating healthy; allowing God to feed me! I can’t do it all alone.”
- “It was a benefit to learn about the different activities to relieve stress and to learn more about healthy eating.”
- “I learned how to relax more.”

- “The variety of ways to cope with stress have been introduced. Now I am ready to pick what works best for me. Also, I learned so much about nutrition. I really liked the scale and information about my body.”

Women’s Group Support and Building Relationships

- “I enjoyed working with the other ladies of the church.”
- “I benefited from my relationship with women in the group.”
- “It was a fun sharing time with ‘sisters.’”
- “When women gather, I find there is an energy and I could feel that during our wellness classes. I benefit from that energy.”
- “Enjoyment of being with females only.”
- “I benefited by growing my friendships.”
- “Met and became closer to some of the group.”
- “Enjoyed meeting and becoming acquainted with new people.”
- “It reinforced my need (and other’s, too!) to be together and support each other.”
- “Great to fellowship with other women. We really need each other.”

Creative Benefits

- “I started painting again.”
- “It was fun doing new and creative things.”
- “Liked the combination of physical, mental, and creative activity.”

In addition to the general categories of benefits listed above, one participant’s transformational story of how she benefited from *A Journey in Women’s Wellness* stands

out from the others. This participant is the same woman who lost the most weight (15.0 pounds) and indicated the highest increased creativity (twelve out of eighteen examples listed) on the post-survey. She had suffered three major losses during the year preceding her participation in this group. She went through a divorce, and both her mother and her brother died in 2009. She shared this journey story in the post-survey:

I made progress toward my spiritual wellness goals. I am closer to God, more than I've ever been in my life. I understand God's sovereignty. (I "get it.") I'm more at peace and feel His protection. I started with turning it over to God. Miraculously, through grace, supernaturally, over time, my sadness, loneliness, and stress started to disappear. I find myself conversing with God throughout the day now. My coping skills have improved through techniques learned in the wellness class.

At the beginning of the class, my life was extremely stressful. Through breathing, being, and prayer, I'm working to stop worrying and instead turn my concerns over to God. Less stress equals more energy. I am learning to be kind to my body through healthy eating and getting enough sleep and water.

I started playing the piano again. I began diving into reading the Bible.

I made progress in all four categories of wellness. This journey pushed me out of my sorrow and brokenness and into a better place. I feel release.

[Referring to a class activity]: On Day One, I stood completely outside of the cross on the floor when we considered our strengths, and on the crux when we considered our weaknesses. Just the process of assessing where I was spiritually, physically, emotionally, and with my relationships brought me to my knees. I cried most of that first session, because I felt God's love and mercy. [The researcher] led me to the river and let me weep to my Daddy. Many times that week, I cried out to Him. And immediately, I felt a rush of peacefulness flow over me. I was finally going to Him and could feel and hear Him. Something truly changed in me that week and in the weeks that followed. He poured His grace out to me and I could feel this bubble around me, keeping and guarding me from further harm or despair.

I've been a Christian all my life, but never have I felt as close to God as I do today. The "wellness journey" helped heal my brokenness and brought me to a place of "abundant life." It's work in progress, but I get it and embrace all that I've learned.

Although I had been working hard in my recovery journey from "the pit," it was this class that propelled me into core healing and provided the path and means for moving forward in my life and in my journey of growing closer to God. This class launched me into a new, positive perspective on life. It was the right class, the right time, the right group of people, the right instructor, and it was in the church.

The second post-survey question that helped the researcher assess how the participants had internalized and integrated their learning was Question Twenty-three: "Look at the mandala on the next page. What does it suggest or symbolize to you as you consider holistic human health?" (See Appendix B for this design.) The concept of the mandala was introduced in Session Four and expanded upon in Session Five. A form of spiritual visual art, Carl Jung referred to mandalas as archetypes or universal symbols, found in every culture of the world as well as in nature. Mandala is a Sanskrit word, loosely translated as "circle." Representing wholeness, it can be seen as a model for the organization of life itself.

At Session Four, the group was introduced to a cross and spiral mandala conceptualized by the researcher to symbolize holistic human health as spirit, mind, body, relationships, and creativity. The original design was graphically enhanced by Contextual Associate Cindy Ware. This cross and spiral symbol was reintroduced as part of the post-survey in Question Twenty-three. The women's answers included the following interpretations of the cross and spiral symbol:

- “Being healthy involves all aspects of health. They all work together. If you are not spiritually and mentally healthy, your overall health suffers.”
- “I have much more to learn. It’s not finished.”
- “All aspects come together and as we learn, we cover each of them on our journey.”
- “God is the center. Heart, mind, body, prayer, spirit.”
- “As we begin, we need to expand and grow outward, learning and improving as we go. When the mandala first starts, there are but a few lines. But at the end, a beautiful pattern has formed-- hopefully, this will be for me at the end of my life.”
- Energy comes from the center—God—universe—world—people...and radiates outward. The circle can also focus energy inward to ‘third eye.’ The lines are the interaction of everything.”
- “Growing in balance.”
- “Everything leads to and comes from our core.”
- “Like our lives, you journey in to the center to come back out into the world, living better, helping others.”
- “Our lives have many paths, but they all intersect in the core of our being. All around those choices is a calming, peaceful flow of life coming from our core out to everything we do and to everyone we interact with.”
- “All aspects of health are related/intertwined.”
- “I see the cross. I then see the cycle of life woven through the cross.”
- “To me it looks like rays of energy/love, and my energy starts in the center and grows outward, with no end in sight.”

- “All parts of ourselves, including spiritual, are so related to every other part.”
- “It all works together. Mind, body, spirit must all be well and in harmony. It is not enough to be good in one area and not the others.”
- “Totality in all directions.”
- “Our health begins with us—in our center—and extends out to everyone we have contact with.”
- “Everything in our lives is interconnected and can become unbalanced when different parts of our lives are stressed, ignored, etc.”
- “It is a labyrinth; a centering of life.”
- “God is the center of our being and we have many different aspects to our lives.”
- “I am on a spiraling path to oneness and wholeness.”

The post-survey responses indicate that significant informational and transformational learning took place as a result of the participants’ engagement in *A Journey in Women’s Wellness*. Women learned new ideas regarding spiritual formation and holistic human health. They integrated new learning into their lives. Their well being and their creativity increased.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, REFLECTION, AND CONCLUSION

Summary of the Model and Results

The women gathered to begin their journey. The researcher came to the first group session on September 19, 2009 with hopes and expectations. The purpose of *A Journey in Women's Wellness* was to help women learn how to increase their well being in spirit, mind, body, and relationships, to achieve increased health, and to experience greater creativity in their lives. In particular, the researcher hoped that overweight and obese participants would lose weight, thereby becoming not only healthier but also more creative. The researcher piloted a collaborative model of spiritual formation for holistic human health, calling forth the gifts of the contextual associates, presenters from the community, and the women themselves.

Why did the women come to this group? The thirty-nine participants said they were attracted to *A Journey in Women's Wellness* for a variety of reasons, which they listed on their September 19, 2009 pre-survey. These women said they came seeking:

- Stress relief
- New contacts and friends
- Wellness in all parts of life
- New ways to worship and connect with God

- Growth
- Calmness
- Building relationships
- Gain inspiration and focus
- Healthy body transformation
- Connection with like-minded women
- Increased emotional security
- Self-improvement
- A more open mind and heart to accept others
- Peace
- Improved spiritual well being
- A closer look at personal health and wellness from a different perspective
- Hope and faith
- Learning to relax
- More peace between mind and body
- Learning to be silent and listen to God
- Closer relationship with Christ
- Wanting to feel better
- Peace with positive thoughts
- Wanting to be better
- Wanting to take a journey to wellness with other women
- Deeper spirituality
- Grief recovery

- Coping with aging
- The possibility of refocusing efforts
- Better self-understanding
- Total wellness
- Learning
- Desire to be whole
- Wanting wellness tools and techniques to weave and integrate into daily life

Two of the participants came with a sense that the timing of this wellness journey was right for them. One woman named this feeling “synchronicity,” while the other called it a “God wink.”

The pre-survey responses above indicate that every participant came to this group in some way seeking increased well being. Their post-survey responses indicate that 100% of the respondents experienced greater wellness by the end of the seven-week study.

Only one of the participants specifically named weight loss on the pre-survey as a reason why she came to the group. None of the women mentioned a desire for increased creativity as an expected outcome of their journey. *A Journey in Women’s Wellness* was not advertised nor designed to be a weight loss program or a creativity class. However, as women engaged in self-assessment and goal setting, seventeen of the thirty-two participants who completed the post-survey reported that during the six-session course they set weight loss as a physical health goal. Fifteen of these seventeen women lost weight. Four women who did not set a weight loss goal lost weight. Therefore, nineteen women (59.4% of the group) reported that they lost weight. The total weight loss experienced by these nineteen women from September 19 to October 31, 2009 was 87.5

pounds. Their weight loss ranged from one to fifteen pounds. The average loss was 5.83 pounds. Nine out of nineteen women lost 3.0 pounds, the most frequently reported weight loss per person among the group.

Increased creativity among the participants was an outcome the researcher desired. In particular, the researcher was curious to see if women who lost weight would report increased creativity. The post-survey responses indicated that thirty-one women (96.9% of the respondents) experienced heightened creativity, as measured by their answers to eighteen possible expressions of creativity. Moreover, the results indicate that women who lost weight experienced a greater upsurge of creativity than the women who did not lose weight. The nineteen women who lost weight averaged 5.0 creativity responses. In contrast, the thirteen women who did not lose weight averaged 3.3 creativity responses. The “biggest loser” in this study lost 15.0 pounds. Significantly, she was also the “greatest gainer,” with twelve creativity increase responses. Similarly, the woman who lost the third greatest number of pounds, 8.0, affirmed the second greatest number of creativity responses, ten out of eighteen.

The researcher also observed that a modest weight loss may be enough to heighten creativity. Four women who reported above average (more than five) creativity increase responses each lost 3.0 pounds, the weight loss reported most frequently by the group. This data suggests that a healthy weight loss of a half pound or less per week over seven weeks may be enough to trigger increased creativity.

The above findings support the research hypothesis that intentional weight loss, plus engagement in spiritual formation curriculum focused upon holistic human health as part of Christian congregational ministry, yields increased overall human wellness and

wholeness, specifically including gain in creativity. It appears that among this group of women, weight loss may have been a driver in increasing their creativity. In addition to the data regarding weight loss and creativity, post-test surveys indicate that 100% of the respondents experienced progress toward their self-determined health goals and increase in their overall well being during the seven weeks of *A Journey in Women's Wellness*. These survey responses appear in detail in Chapter Five.

Conclusions Regarding the Design of the Ministry Model

The researcher regards this pilot program of spiritual formation for holistic human health as a success at Mason United Methodist Church for the following reasons:

- Survey results support the validity of the hypothesis.
- The researcher's hopes, expectations, and goals for the group were met.
- The participants' expectations for the group were met.
- Women accepted the researcher's four dimensions of holistic human health as spirit, mind, body, and relationships
- Women reported that they grew closer to God.
- Women's stated need for friendship, support, and sisterhood were met.
- Obese and overweight women lost weight.
- Nearly all the women experienced an upsurge in creativity.
- All participants reported an increase in their well being.
- Women reported that they experienced transformational learning because of this group experience. Lives changed for the better.
- Women reported that they enjoyed this approach to learning.

- Women enjoyed the curriculum content, including the opportunity to learn non-Western health practices, including Tai Chi, Qigong, and Healing Touch.
- Post-survey comments indicate the participants would welcome another opportunity to engage in *A Journey in Women's Wellness* in the near future, with several women volunteering to assist in organizing and leading a group.

Possible Changes for Future Model Implementation

Post-survey comments indicate that the participants would have appreciated more time for small group discussion during each of the sessions. Discussion time helps build relationships among the group. Their surveys show that many of these women are hungry for friendship and sisterhood. More opportunity to talk and share would foster supportive and meaningful relationships among participants. Also, a larger proportion of discussion time would improve the model by encouraging the participants to debrief and process new information. In addition, when women gather, they typically like to talk to each other. This model would likely be even more enjoyable to the participants if it includes more discussion time.

Participants also suggested alternatives to a two-hour, weekly, six-week meeting schedule. Several women suggested that each week might feature only one special presentation (tai chi, yoga, belly dancing, etc.) while lengthening the course to ten or twelve weeks. Women who suggested a longer series also felt that this format might better facilitate and support long-term health transformation. Others suggested a one session per month format, especially as a follow-up for participants who had completed the six session course.

Several women who completed *A Journey in Women's Wellness* expressed interest in helping to establish tai chi, yoga, and nutrition classes at Mason UMC in the context of health ministry. Healing Touch is being offered twice monthly at the church, and this ministry continues to grow. The researcher is working with various presenters and church administration to implement additional wellness ministries onsite.

Further Work Regarding Soul Friend Relationships

Healthy relationships hold amazing power to heal and sustain life. Along with spirit, mind, and body, one of the four components of holistic human health presented through *A Journey in Women's Wellness* is *relationship*.

The women in this class came already aware of the importance of relationships. Their responses to the pre-survey indicated that most of them were seeking friendships with other women. Their post-survey responses stated that among the benefits of the course, they enjoyed being in the company of other women.

This ministry model may be improved by placing greater emphasis on how to cultivate supportive, life-giving relationships as an essential component of holistic well being. The author has begun working on curriculum for a class session to help women identify and cultivate *soul friendships* in their lives.

The concept of "soul friend" originates in Celtic Christianity, from the Gaelic phrase *anam* (soul) *cara* (friend.), meaning "a person to whom you could reveal the hidden intimacies of your life."¹ Mahan Siler uses the Gaelic phrase and spells it *AnamCara* to describe "a network of small collegial circles each of six to eight clergy

¹ John O'Donohue, *Anam Cara: A Book of Celtic Wisdom* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc., 1997), xviii.

leaders of congregations who meet regularly to offer mutual support, collaboration, and accountability in their practices of theological reflection, leadership, and Spirit awareness.”² Henri Nouwen employed the term “soul friend” to describe the relationship between a spiritual director and directee.³ The researcher uses the term *soul friend* to describe a *soul-nourishing mutual relationship between two individuals that arises from shared collegiality, comradeship, and companionship*. This definition includes the following components:

Soul-nourishing: A soul friendship is a life-giving, inspiring, sustaining interpersonal relationship, as important to human holistic health as nutritious food, water, sleep, and exercise. Soul friends like and enjoy each other. Soul friendships are intimate, connecting “the deeps” of one person’s true being with another. As in the Garden of Eden narrative describing the original relationship between the first two human beings, *ishah* (Woman) and *ish* (Man) in Genesis 2:25, soul friends can be metaphorically “naked and unashamed” in the ease with which they can be fully present to one another. Spending time with a soul friend is mutually renewing and refreshing. Please note: unless soul friends are legally married to each other, the author recommends they remain fully clothed in each other’s presence at all times. Soul friendships are intimate but not sexual.

Mutual: Soul friends share equity of relational power, authority, and position. Soul friendship differs from hierarchical or asymmetrical relationships including employer and employee, teacher and student, counselor and client, doctor and patient,

² Mahan Siler, *AnamCara: Collegial Clergy Communities* (Raleigh, NC: Publications Unltd, 2008), 9.

³ Henri J. M. Nouwen with Michael J. Christensen and Rebecca J. Laird, *Spiritual Direction: Wisdom for the Long Walk of Faith* (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 2006), ix.

spiritual director and directee, pastor and parishioner. Soul friends are equals, each one free to both give and receive in the relationship.

Two individuals: The mutual interdependence that soul friendship requires is only possible between reasonably mature, healthy, self-actualized adults. Soul friendships cannot be co-dependent, needy, clingy, intrusive, manipulative, or self-serving of one's personal agenda. When developing a new soul friendship, should concerns arise regarding the person's emotional health, integrity, or intentions, wisdom prompts discontinuing the relationship.

Collegiality: Colleagues are fellow workers. Soul friends are often brought together through their shared ministry or common interests. Soul friends may initially be professional associates, classmates, or small group members.

Comradeship: A comrade is not only a workmate, but also a friend and fellow soldier. Comrades are united by loyalty to one another, as well as to common purposes and goals. Comrades share a spirit of "We're in this together" as well as "I've got your back." Soul friends share common dreams and visions about life. Although they may not always agree on the details, soul friends are on the same page regarding life's Big Picture.

Companionship: A companion accompanies, associates with, and shares with another. This word derives from Latin and literally means "one who breaks bread with another." Soul friendship grows gradually over shared time, space, and experiences of being with one another. When in-person contact is not practical or possible, soul friendship may be established and sustained via email, phone, or other forms of communication that provide both friends with a sense of "being there" with and for each other. However, nothing beats face time. Soul friendship blooms best when friends are

together, sharing subtle nuances of verbal communication, humor, body language, eye contact, and touch.

Soul friendships are rare and precious. Well-tended soul friendships may continue throughout a lifetime. In fact, it is possible that soul friendships may be eternal, enduring beyond mortal life. One might reasonably expect to experience a soul friendship with perhaps one to twelve individuals over the course of a lifetime. Human lives might connect with about the number of soul friends that it takes to constitute a good dinner party. Traditionally, brides collect place settings for eight to twelve guests. However, two people are enough to make a party. Similarly, the number of one's soul friends could be counted on one or both hands.

The precise nature of the relationship between soul friends is as unique as their diverse personalities and gifts. However, all soul friendships share the following distinctive and universal characteristics:

- They companion each other during days that are both ordinary and significant.
- Their relationship develops gently over time and experience.
- They support and sustain one another.
- Their soul friendship is built upon mutual trust, respect, and love.
- They honor one another's privacy and confidentiality.

The author's soul friends are both male and female, both single and married. Each soul friendship grew from Christian ministry relationships with clergy and laity. However, none of these soul friendships with laypersons include the author's own parishioners. It is important to maintain appropriate ministerial boundaries.

While not all soul friendship networks look the same, the author's sacred friendship circle contains the following common threads:

- Worship and pray together
- Frequently share the Sacrament of Holy Communion
- Share meals and table conversation
- Hospitality in one another's homes and workplaces
- Travel together in planes, trains, boats, automobiles and on foot
- Tell one another our stories
- Ask one another for advice
- Share ideas, plans, dreams, visions, and goals with one another
- Share common stories: "Remember the time when we...?"
- Share common interests, including:
 - Love of the written and spoken word
 - Delight in music
 - Cultural, sports, and leisure events and activities
- Serve together in ministry and mission
- Humor, both tongue-in-cheek and fall-on-floor laughing
- Celebrate and mourn life's passages together
- Maintain regular contact. Be present to one another in person, via phone, through old-fashioned written correspondence, and through the gifts of twenty-first century technology
- History of shared covenant small group life
- Each soul friend knows at least one other, some being married couples

- Linked through relationships with mutual organizations, movements, and institutions.

Soul friends are those rare individuals whom one invites into the private space of life's best and worst. Their presence comforts, encourages, inspires, and heals. In the event of serious injury, illness, major life crisis, or impending death, this is the circle of friends the author wants as sacred companions.

The thirty-nine women who participated in *A Journey in Women's Wellness* in fall 2009 expressed yearning for significant relationships with other women. Post-survey responses indicate that building relationships did occur during the class. The researcher hopes to research and continue to develop tools for building significant "soul friend" relationships that may be incorporated in future versions of *A Journey in Women's Wellness* curriculum. Adding breadth and depth to the curriculum regarding the relationship dimension of holistic human health would respond to the expressed needs of the participants, and may strengthen this ministry model.

Articulate and Test "The Creativity Component"

A Journey in Women's Wellness presented a four-fold model of holistic human health, consisting of spirit, mind, body, and relationships. The researcher tested the hypothesis that intentional weight loss, plus engagement in spiritual formation curriculum focused upon holistic human health as part of Christian congregational ministry, yields increased overall human wellness and wholeness, specifically including gain in creativity. To test this hypothesis, the researcher structured the curriculum to avoid including the word "creativity" in the model of holistic human health being taught. However, based

upon the results of the model supporting the research hypothesis, the researcher plans to develop and teach a five-fold model of holistic human health, comprised of spirit, mind, body, relationships, and creativity. Results of the author's research regarding the outcomes of *A Journey in Women's Wellness* indicate that weight loss, as well as other increased health markers, gave rise to increased creativity in thirty-eight out of thirty-nine women completing the post-survey. Taking the first step toward better health is in itself a creative act. All health decisions accompanied by action for change indicate increased creativity. How much greater might the increase in creativity have been if the participants had been taught to expect and cultivate greater creativity in their lives as they became healthier? The researcher plans to continue to explore the relationship between creativity and the recovery and maintenance of women's well being. It appears that rather than increased creativity being caused by weight loss and other indicators of increased health, creativity may be both the source and the result of increased wellness in spirit, mind, body, and relationships. The relationship between creativity and well being is mysterious. Many creative geniuses have been unhealthy in spirit, mind, body, and relationships. Artists Vincent Van Gogh and Edvard Munch provide two examples. Munch wrote, "Sickness, insanity, and death were the angels that surrounded my cradle and they have followed me throughout my life."⁴ If well being were a prerequisite for creative expression, Van Gogh might never have painted a single picture, and Munch would probably not have created "The Scream." Somehow, the creative spark prevails. It may be that Van Gogh, Munch, and other artists experienced their greatest productivity during periods of relative recovery of health.

⁴ Gary E. McVeigh, "Medicine Then and Now," *Ulster Medical Journal*, <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1940293/> (accessed March 5, 2010).

Well being, not ill health, gives rise to the best and most creative use of human gifts.

What good works might result if creativity and overall health received intentional nurture? What if the local church discovered how to teach overall human wellness and wholeness, including increased creativity, and successfully implemented this plan?

The author plans to continue research in preparation for writing an updated and expanded curriculum of *A Journey in Women's Wellness* for use in the local church that teaches a five-fold model of holistic human health in spirit, mind, body, relationships, and creativity.

Additional Possibilities for Adaptations of the Model

A Journey in Women's Wellness served as a liminal, or threshold experience for the participants in the pilot group at Mason United Methodist Church, through which they came into new and deeper understanding of how they could adopt lifestyle change that would lead to increased well being in spirit, mind, body, relationships, and creativity. For overweight and obese individuals, engagement in this curriculum has the capacity to promote the healing of broken relationships with food, with self, and with the world. This model contains the potential to evoke a similar liminal experience in other settings, leading to lasting transformation of persons and systems.

A Journey in Women's Wellness curriculum may be used in other local church congregations. Congregations and wellness ministry leaders may wish to collaborate with partners of their own choosing. For example, the special presentations at Mason, including tai chi, qigong, and belly dancing, may not specifically appeal to all wellness groups. Other physical activities may be substituted according to the preferences of the group.

A potential companion curriculum to *A Journey in Women's Wellness* might be *A Journey in Men's Wellness*. Numerous questions arise regarding how to develop an effective curriculum for men. How do gender differences impact human holistic health in spirit, mind, body, relationships, and creativity? What curriculum components of experiential learning would best be changed to appeal to male learners?

A possible follow-up course to either *A Journey in Women's Wellness* or a proposed *Journey in Men's Wellness* could involve exploration of gifts and call. As learners identify areas of life in which they experience increased creativity, the local church could equip persons to use their newfound and rediscovered gifts. One of the major roles of the clergy is to evoke the gifts of the laity and help them exercise their gifts. Through this course, the local church could help individuals not only develop their personal human potential, but could also help women and men enter new places of ministry and service for the cause of Christ. As increased well being gives rise to increased creativity, the Church can more fully become a gift-baring, gift-bearing community of faith. Similarly, discipleship formation ministry could be shaped around the five-fold vision of holistic health in spirit, mind, body, relationships and creativity, helping persons to grow in each of these areas of life and well being.

A Journey in Women's Wellness could be adapted to become the core curriculum for ministry formation small groups in seminaries and other training programs for clergy and laity. Similarly, denominational ministry formation small groups, such as the United Methodist Residency Years Program for Provisional Members, leading to full membership and ordination, could be shaped around the five-fold model of holistic human health in spirit, mind, body, relationships, and creativity.

The United Methodist Church has granted ordination of women since 1956.

Nevertheless, clergywomen in this and other denominations continue to face gender issues in professional ministry that may negatively impact their overall health. An adaptation of *A Journey in Women's Wellness* may be particularly helpful in safeguarding and improving the health of women in ministry, and in helping all to live forth their fullest creative potential.

In the Wesleyan spirit, The United Methodist Church encourages the formation of small groups, sometimes called clusters, for covenant mutual accountability. Such groups could be formed around the principles of holistic human health. Clergy colleagues could mutually support one another toward increased well being in spirit, mind, body, relationships, and creativity.

Impact upon Mason United Methodist Church

A Journey in Women's Wellness marked the birth of a new wellness ministry at Mason UMC. The participants enthusiastically received the program, and strongly recommended on the post-survey that this program should be ongoing. More importantly, several participants volunteered to take leadership in an ongoing wellness ministry at Mason based on this model. As a result, the Trustees granted a request in church policy which allows wellness instructors to offer classes at the church as part of this new ministry. The current building addition is scheduled for completion by December 2010. When the new sanctuary is ready for occupancy, the current worship space will become a multi-ministry room which will easily accommodate group physical activities such as wellness classes. Already, a women's weight loss Bible study began in January 2010,

which created both a follow-up opportunity for participants in *A Journey in Women's Wellness* and an opportunity for new participants to begin improving their well being in a holistic way. In summer 2010 congregational leaders in this burgeoning wellness ministry will meet for further visioning, with the goal of bringing a plan for implementation to the Administrative Council.

The implementation of this ministry model in fall 2009 continues to help overweight and obese women lose weight and gain creativity. In addition, *A Journey in Women's Wellness* has created a women's wellness community that includes not only members of the congregation but also participants from beyond the church. The participants' surveys show that they came to the group hungry for relationships with other women. This ministry model addresses women's expressed need to be in community. It is important to continue growing this wellness community in and beyond Mason UMC so that these relationships can deepen and widen. The participants all made positive strides toward transformed healthier lifestyles. The women who experienced *A Journey in Women's Wellness* continue to create a lasting and far-reaching impact upon their families and the larger community as they leave their health footprints which others see and follow toward increased well being.

Impact of the Project upon the Researcher

This project grew from the researcher's personal experience with cyclical weight gain and loss throughout her life. The story of the creation and implementation of this model is one of personal transformation, not only from obesity to normal weight, but into

a joyous season of life and ministry. The researcher experienced healing in spirit, mind, body, relationships, and creativity through the process of creating this ministry model. People now refer to the researcher as “The Wellness Leader,” a new call and identity. Having discovered the principals of holistic human health and well being, she feels a new sense of purpose in teaching others how to live holistically and creatively. Her hope for the future is to continue to live forth a “cross and spiral” lifestyle that is Christ-centered, balanced, and creatively energized. The researcher affirms that it is possible to break free from cyclical weight gain and loss into an upward spiral of increased health, wholeness, and well being that gives rise to increasing creativity for God’s good purposes.

Concluding Reflections

A Journey in Women’s Wellness presented a collaborative teaching model of spiritual formation for holistic human health in the local church. As a result, transformative learning took place in the lives of the thirty-nine participants. Obese and overweight women lost weight and thereby gained greater wellness. Women of normal weight set other goals and made progress toward them. All participants reported gains in overall well being. Thirty-eight participants reported specific increases in their creativity. This pilot program evoked positive change in women’s lives. In the process of creating this ministry model, the researcher experienced personal transformation. The results of this model serve as a sign of the transforming Body of Christ, calling individuals and communities to visibly and tangibly embody change.

GLOSSARY

Belly Dancing – a form of dance created by women for women, originating in Middle Eastern culture

Body Mass Index (BMI) - a reliable indicator of total body fat, which is related to the risk of disease and death.

Creativity – inventive, imaginative, intellectual, or artistic energy made substantive by human expression. For further definitions, see Chapter Three.

Extreme obesity - BMI 40.0 +

Healing Touch - a non-invasive energy based therapeutic approach to healing, in which the practitioner uses light hand placements on the client's body to restore balance in the energy field

Holistic human health – well being of the whole person in body, mind, spirit, and relationships

Mandala – from a Sanskrit word meaning “circle,” a form of spiritual visual art representing wholeness

Normal weight - BMI 18.5 – 24.9

Obesity - BMI 30.0 and above

Overweight - BMI 25.0 – 29.9

Qigong – meditative exercises that comprise one of the cornerstones of traditional Chinese medicine; “Qi” translates as life force; “gong” means accomplishment, or skill cultivated through steady practice

Reiki – translated as “universal life force,” a Japanese form of therapeutic energy treatment involving healing with the practitioner's hands; similar to Healing Touch

Tai chi – a Chinese martial art and system of calisthenics consisting of sequences of very slow controlled movements

Underweight – BMI less than 18.5

Yoga – a Hindu system of meditative postures, or asanas; from a Sanskrit word meaning “union”

APPENDIX A

A JOURNEY IN WOMEN'S WELLNESS CURRICULUM

A JOURNEY
IN
WOMEN'S WELLNESS

Alice Kay Hoover
Mason United Methodist Church
Mason, Ohio
September 19 – October 31, 2009

Welcome to *A Journey in Women's Wellness*! I'm delighted that you are a participant in our group.

A Journey in Women's Wellness is a curriculum that I'm developing for use at Mason UMC as part of my Doctor of Ministry degree program at United Theological Seminary. My general area of academic interest is Christian spiritual formation—the practices of prayer and other spiritual exercises that for 2,000 years have helped people become formed in the mind, image, and likeness of Jesus Christ and have served as means of God's grace.

My area of academic specialization is spiritual formation for holistic human health. I was introduced to this idea in the 1980's through the work of The Reverend Dr. James K. Wagner, a United Methodist pastor in Ohio, who published several books about the healing ministry of Christ in the church today. Dr. Wagner's work introduced me to the concept that humans are spirit/mind/body/relational beings. Furthermore, each of these four aspects of human health is affected by the others—both negatively and positively.

We will gather as a group of women seeking wellness and companionship on the journey. We will meet for two hours on six Saturdays during September and October. We will be introduced to Christian scripture and traditional practices that will focus and ground our journey toward increased health in spirit, mind, body, and relationships. In addition, we will be introduced to health-bringing practices from other cultures and spiritual traditions around the world.

You are part of the initial pilot group of women with whom I am testing these ideas and teaching methods. I hope that during the six sessions of *A Journey in Women's Wellness* you will (1) learn ways to become healthier in spirit, mind, body, and relationships, and (2) experience increased wellness and wholeness through life application. To assess the effectiveness of this curriculum, I will ask you to complete written surveys at several points during our six sessions. After analysis of the surveys, I may invite some of you to participate in a focus group for additional insights in early November.

Please wear comfortable clothes and shoes that will allow you to move easily as we learn gentle exercises and body movement. You will always have several options of your level of engagement with all Saturday activities. You may choose to:

- Observe
- Engage with modifications (seated in a chair, moving at a slower pace, or omitting motions with which you feel uncomfortable)
- Fully engage in the activity as modeled by the leader

You may wish to bring the following items to class sessions:

- Bible
- Notebook and pen
- Crayons, markers, or colored pencils
- Yoga mat, beach towel, blanket, or sheet (some activities will include an option to sit or lie down on the floor)

Throughout our *Journey in Women's Wellness*, I am available to listen, support, and assist. Please contact me at

akhoover@masonumc.org

937-689-7921

513-398-4741 church office

513-492-9229 parsonage

Julian of Norwich, a 14th century Christian contemplative, wrote, "And so our good Lord answered to all the questions and doubts which I could raise, saying most comfortingly in this fashion:

- I will make all things well
- I shall make all things well
- I may make all things well
- I can make all things well
- And you will see that yourself, that all things will be well."
 - (*Showings*, short text, chapter 15, May 13, 1373)

May it be so! Blessings on our shared journey!

Alice Kay Hoover
Associate Pastor
Mason United Methodist Church

A JOURNEY IN WOMEN'S WELLNESS
SESSION 1
SEPTEMBER 19, 2009

Greetings

Welcome to *A Journey in Women's Wellness!* – Handout

Scripture Foundation for Session 1: “Lord, teach us to pray.”

Luke 11:1-4 *The Message*:

One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of the disciples said, “Master, teach us to pray just as John taught his disciples.” So he said, “When you pray, say:

Father,
 Reveal who you are.
 Set the world right.
 Keep us alive with three square meals.
 Keep us forgiven with you and forgiving others.
 Keep us safe from ourselves and the Devil.”

Luke 11:9:

Ask and you'll get,
 Seek and you'll find,
 Knock and the door will open.

Spiritual Exercise: Meditation on the Heart's Longing

Adapted from *50 Ways to Pray* by Teresa A. Blythe

- Begin with two minutes of silence, noticing your breath.
- Silently, slowly re-read Luke 11:1-4 and 11:9.
- Allow yourself another two minutes of silence, focusing on your breath.
- As you feel ready, silently, slowly re-read the above scriptures.
- In silent reflection, consider:
 - What are you looking for today?
 - If Jesus were to ask you this question, what would you say?
 - As you begin this journey in wellness, what are you searching for?
 - What are you longing for?
- Maintaining silence, write or draw an answer on a separate sheet of paper, which is yours to keep.

- After writing or drawing an answer, end this exercise by noticing the following:

Where did you feel a sense of God's Spirit?

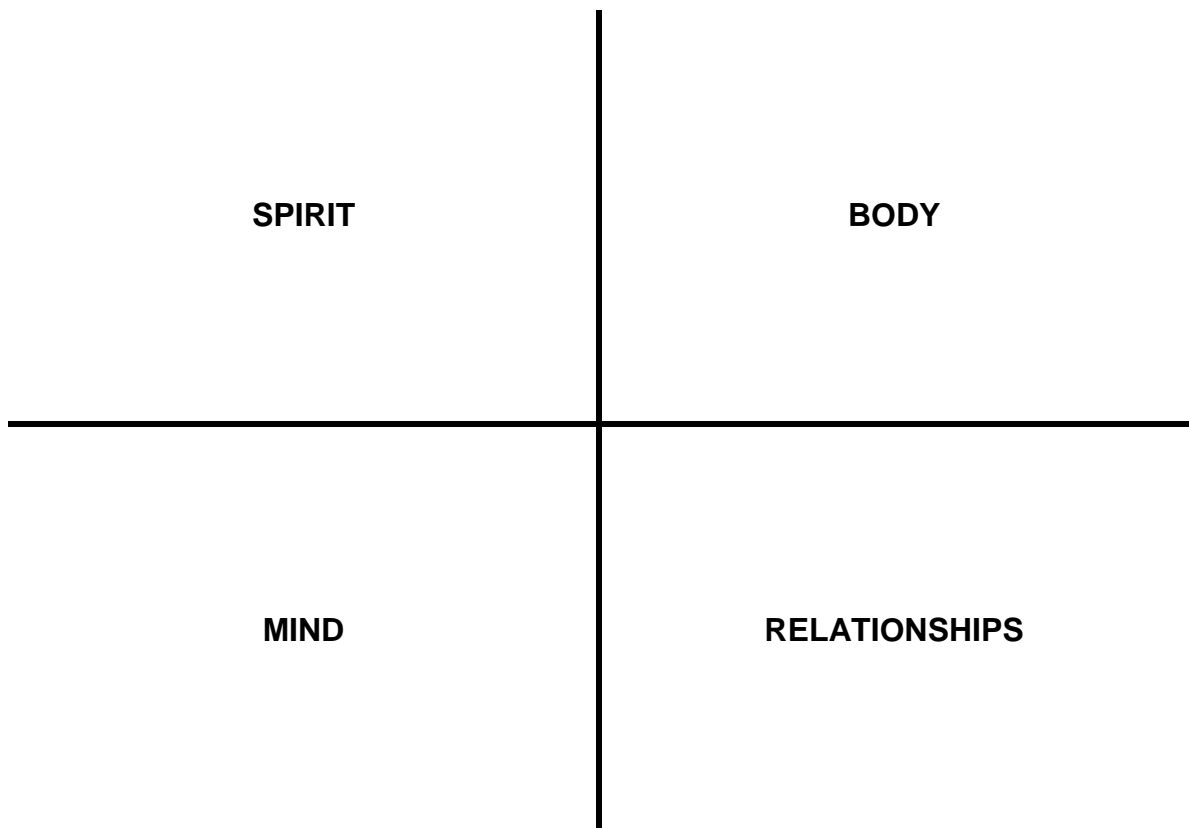
Where did you feel the Spirit blocked?

What contributed to freedom of the Spirit?

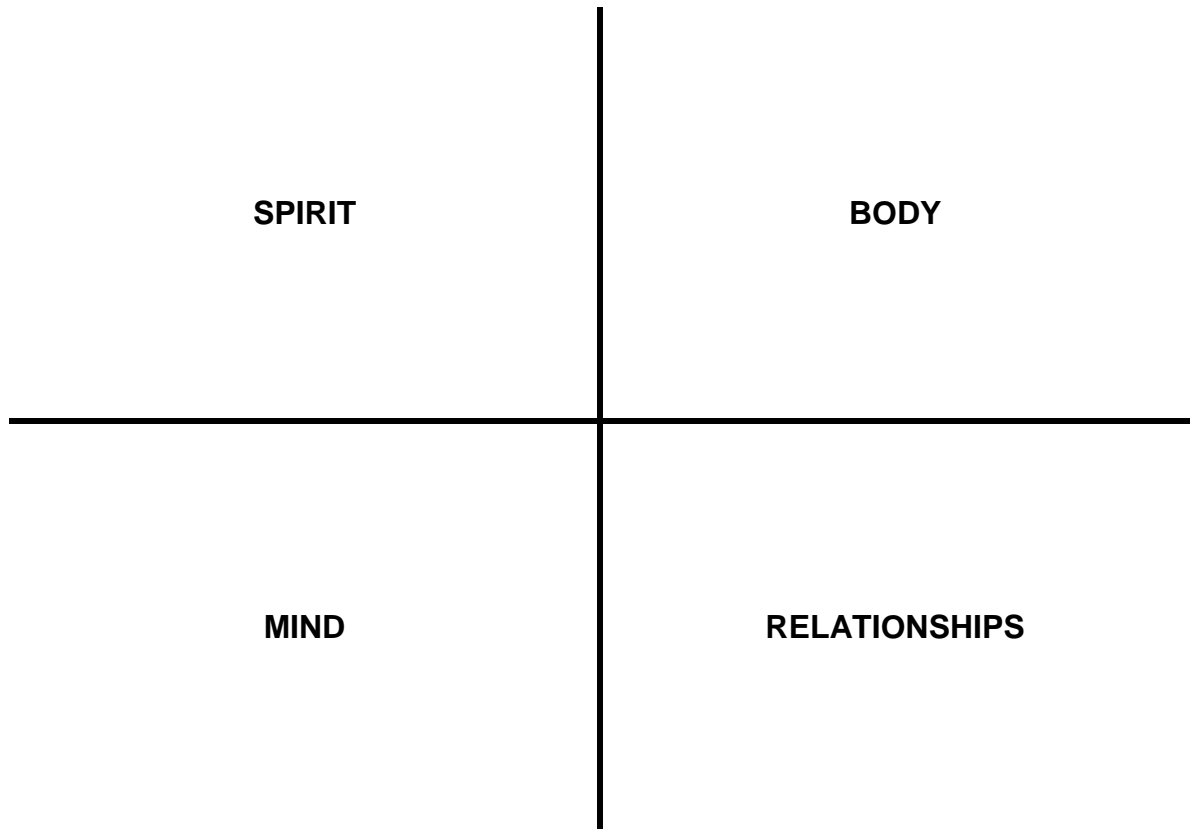
What contributed to blocks of the Spirit?

Setting the Course for Our Journey: Increasing Our Health in Spirit, Body, Mind, and Relationships

How I See My Health Today



How I Want to Be



Group Exercise: Who are my Sisters on this journey?

Consider your current health in spirit, body, mind, and relationships. Where are you the strongest today? Go to that quadrant marked on the floor. Take this paper and a pen or pencil with you.

Notice your companions in this quadrant. These women are your Sisters in Strength. Greet one another. Exchange contact information.

- *Where am I the strongest today? Four women who will stand strong with me are:*

Name _____ Phone _____

Email _____

Name _____ Phone _____

Email _____

Name _____ Phone _____

Email _____

Name _____ Phone _____

Email _____

Again consider your health in spirit, body, mind, and relationships. In which area do you most desire to gain increased health? Go to that quadrant marked on the floor.

Notice your companions in this quadrant. These women are your Sisters in Support. Greet one another. Exchange contact information.

- *What area of my health needs the greatest care and attention? Four women who will walk with me toward increased health are:*

Name _____ Phone _____

Email _____

Name _____ Phone _____

Email _____

Name _____ Phone _____

Email _____

Name _____ Phone _____

Email _____

Today's Journey Actions:

During the next 15-20 minutes, as Jane Zopff provides meditative music

- Complete "As We Begin Our Journey" survey and place it at the center of your table.
- Walk around the room, slowly, reflectively, meditatively. Listen to the Spirit. Silently be in conversation with God.
- If you so desire, you may receive anointing with oil as a sign-act that you invite God to be your partner in your journey toward wholeness.

Closing Moments: Gathered at Our Tables

As I journey through the week ahead, what next steps do I need to take that will benefit my health?

How will I support and be supported by my Sisters on this journey?

- **At home, please complete the brief "My Health Statistics" form and bring it with you next week.**

Body Prayer and The Lord's Prayer

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
 Hallowed be thy name.
 Thy kingdom come,
 Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
 Give us this day our daily bread.
 And forgive us our trespasses
 as we forgive those who trespass against us.
 And lead us not into temptation,
 But deliver us from evil.
 For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever.
 Amen.**

Blessing and Sending Forth

Let us go forth in peace.
 May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,
 And the love of God,
 And the communion of the Holy Spirit
 Be with us all.
Amen.

A JOURNEY IN WOMEN'S WELLNESS
Schedule of Topics and Special Presenters

September 19	Beginning the Journey Jane Zopff – Harp Music for Meditation
September 26	Susan Evans – Tai Chi Jacquie Marshall – Nutrition
October 3	Bryn Brock – Healing Touch Jay Nesselroad – Drumming Circle
October 10	Erin Kelley – Dance Sonya Miller-Kravetz – Qigong
October 17	No class session – Consignment Sale
October 24	Beth Tysl – Yoga Cindy Ware – Ojo de Dios Mandalas
October 31	So Far on the Journey

A JOURNEY IN WOMEN'S WELLNESS
SESSION 2
SEPTEMBER 26, 2009

PLEASE COMPLETE "JOURNEY SURVEY FOR SESSION 2"

Greetings

Herstory of the Week: Susanna Wesley, England 1669-1742

- Mother of 19 children, 9 of whom died in infancy. The remaining 10 included John and Charles Wesley, founders of the Methodist Movement.
- A well-educated woman—rare in 17th century England. Mastered Greek, Latin, and French.
- Her husband, father, grandfather, and three sons were preachers.
- She home schooled each child from his or her 5th birthday to age 10-12.
- She conscientiously trained each child in religion and theology, including church rules and the significance of the Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion.
- One night a week, Susanna set aside one-on-one time with each child for private prayer and conversation about his or her spiritual life.
- As she lay dying at age 73, she asked her children to sing a psalm of praise "as soon as I am released."

A Pocket History of John Wesley by Charles A. Sauer

Scripture Foundation for Session 1: "Give us each day our daily bread."

Luke 11:1-4 NRSV (New Revised Standard Version)

Jesus was praying in a certain place, and after he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples." He said to them, "When you pray, say:

Father, hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come.

Give us each day our daily bread.

And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us.

And do not bring us to the time of trial."

Luke 11:9 NRSV

"So I say to you,

Ask, and it will be given you;

Search, and you will find;

Knock, and the door will be opened for you."

Spiritual Exercise: Breath Prayer

- Sit comfortably. Balance your weight in your chair, with feet on the floor.
- Rest your hands, palms up, on your thighs.
- As you breathe, silently repeat these words:

(inhale) *Lord, let me receive*
 (exhale) *the food that I need.*

- Continue this Breath Prayer for 3 minutes.
- Consider these Reflection Questions, writing your thoughts on this paper if you so desire:

What feeds my spirit, body, mind, and relationships?

What food do I need today?

“Taste and See” (Psalm 34:8)

Taste and see, taste and see the goodness of the Lord.

O taste and see, taste and see the goodness of the Lord, of the Lord.

(James E. Moore, *The Faith We Sing*)

Health Survey Instructions – Blood Pressure, Height, Weight, Waist

SPECIAL PRESENTATION: TAI CHI with SUSAN EVANS

Sharing My Journey – AK Hoover

- Began November 15, 2008 because of health assessment results: “You’re obese.” High health risk.
- Set written goals and dates to achieve them
- Celebrated goals achieved
- Lost 40 pounds in 45 weeks; 25% of body weight; 8 jeans sizes
- Used Weight Watchers accounting system: calories, fat, fiber = “points”
www.weightwatchers.com
- Portion awareness and control
- Plant-based diet; whole, natural, organic; fruit & vegetable supplements
- Avoid sugar and salt
- Water
- Daily exercise, 30 minutes minimum
- Log all food, beverages, and exercise daily

SPECIAL PRESENTATION: NUTRITION with REVEREND JACKIE MARSHALL

Closing Meditation – Food: Reclaiming its spirituality

When we cultivate food in our backyards, we nurture it; in return, it nourishes us. Food is an integral part of our lives—not just at mealtime. Food is natural and unaffected.

In contrast, modern North America reduces food to a commodity that is manipulated, genetically engineered, irradiated, manufactured, or enriched and fortified. Food is fast—fast-food restaurants, meals in minutes, instant this and instant that. We fill our physical fuel tanks with as much abandon as we fill our car fuel tanks—fast and full—and sometimes at the same stations.

When we make food an integral part of our lives and our homes, it becomes part of our theology. We are connected to our food—cultivating it, preserving it, and preparing it. We are nurturers instead of consumers. This shift affects our relationship to the Giver of our daily bread. We become co-creators with God and stewards of God's garden...

We are what we eat—physically and spiritually. Doris Longacre states that “change is an act of faith.” Our interaction with food will express our faith.

--Mary Beth Lind, Registered Dietitian, Harman, WV

More-with-Less: A World Community Cookbook_by Doris Janzen

Longacre

Before leaving:

- **Share contact information with at least 4 other women if you have not already**
- **Turn in the Session 2 Survey**
- **KEEP “My Health Statistics” and record changes during this Journey**

**A JOURNEY IN WOMEN'S WELLNESS
SESSION 3
OCTOBER 3, 2009**

PLEASE COMPLETE "JOURNEY SURVEY FOR SESSION 3" AND RETURN IT TO THE REGISTRATION TABLE IN THE NARTHEX BEFORE YOU LEAVE TODAY.

Greetings

Announcements

- Susan Evans, Tai Chi instructor, is gathering a list of persons who would be interested in a series of 10 one-hour classes beginning the week of January 11, 2010. Cost is \$75 per person for the series. Call 513-779-4757, leaving your name and phone number. Time and location TBA.
- Scales are available in the kitchen. **Please record today's weight on your Health Survey.**
- Jackie Marshall will share information October 10 on the significance of the health analysis that is available by using her "fancy-schmancy" scale.

Herstory of the Week: Dr. Roberta C. Bondi (born 1941)

- Professor of Church History Emeritus at Candler School of Theology, Emory University in Atlanta; retired 2006
- First woman to be appointed to tenure track position at Emory
- Trailblazer and pioneer in theology and church history
- D.Phil., Oxford University, 1973
- MA, Oxford University, 1967
- BA, Southern Methodist University, 1963
- Specialist in early monastic Christianity; the desert "abbas" and "ammas"; teachers of the early Church; medieval mystic Julian of Norwich

**Excerpt from "God 101: Back to School with Julian of Norwich,"
Christian Century 8/28/02:**

"Julian would tell us first of all that what we need is God. She would reassure us that in order to seek God, we need only what we carry within us, what Julian called the capacities which belong to the image of God *in us*. She calls these capacities truth, wisdom, and delight."

- Author of numerous articles and books, including *A Place to Pray: Reflections on the Lord's Prayer* (1998)
- Personal interests: Drumming (with her spouse, Richard); spinning her own yarn for use in her knitting

Scripture Foundation for Session 3: “Forgive us our sins, for we forgive everyone who does us wrong. And do not bring us to hard testing.” Luke 11:4 (Good News Bible)

Luke 11:1-4; 9 (Good News Bible)

One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.” Jesus said to them, “When you pray, say this:

‘Father:

May your holy name be honored;

May your Kingdom come.

Give us day by day the food we need.

Forgive us our sins, for we forgive everyone who does us wrong. And do not bring us to hard testing.

And so I say to you: Ask, and you will receive; seek, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you.”

Spiritual Exercise: Body Prayer

- Sit comfortably, balanced in your chair, hands on thighs, palms up in receiving gesture.
- Listen to the following reflection about relationships:

Women receive.

Women take experiences into our being.

Women take other people into our body, into our soul, into our memory.

We receive joy.

We receive sorrow.

We receive energy.

What will we create with what we receive?

When we receive wounds at the hands and lips of others, when can we forgive?

When?

How?

How can we forgive?

How long will we hold on to pain?

How can we receive release?

--AKH

[Silent Meditation]

Following silent meditation, we will be directed to do the following together as a group.

- Rise from your chair and stand as you are able.
- Roll your shoulders forward 3 times, then backwards 3 times.

- Roll your head gently to the right, then the left.
- Place your hands in prayer position at your chest.
- Raise hands, still in prayer position, to full arm extension.
- Separate hands. Slowly lower arms in circular manner, feeling your energy extending beyond your physical body.
- Return hands to prayer position; repeat raising arms, lowering arms, feeling your energy a total of 3 times.
- Return hands to prayer position at chest level.
- We will pray aloud in unison a prayer printed below from Roberta Bondi's book *A Place to Pray: Reflections on the Lord's Prayer*, followed by all of us praying The Lord's Prayer aloud in unison.
- I invite you to keep your hands in prayer position at chest level while we pray Roberta's prayer.
- If you so desire, you may wish to make the sign of the cross in reverence to the Trinity as we say the words, "We pray in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."
- As we pray The Lord's Prayer aloud in unison, I invite you to keep your hands in prayer position at chest level until the last line of the prayer. As we say, "For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever," let us raise our hands fully, keeping hands together until fully raised, then breaking into full praise position.
- As we say the concluding "Amen," bring your hands together once more in prayer position at chest level, bowing your head.

Let us pray together:

"Loving, generous, and ever forgiving God, I thank you for the gift of forgiveness, for what you give to me from yourself, and for what you enable me to offer...Please forgive what I cannot yet do myself. I ask these things in your own name, my God, you who in your love have promised to forgive us everything."
We pray in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name.
Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

SPECIAL PRESENTATION:
HEALING TOUCH SPIRITUAL MINISTRY with Bryn Brock

***COMFORT BREAK – 5 minutes**

CALL TO RE-GATHER IN COMMUNITY: A song of release

Down by the Riverside

Gonna lay down my burden, down by the riverside, down by the riverside, down by the riverside;

Gonna lay down my burden, down by the riverside, gonna study war no more.

I ain't gonna study war no more, ain't gonna study war no more, ain't gonna study war no more,

Ain't gonna study war no more, ain't gonna study war no more, ain't gonna study war no more.

SPECIAL PRESENTATION:

DRUMMING CIRCLE with Jay and Phyllis Nesselroad

Closing Meditation – Transformation

The risen, living Christ calls us by our name;

Comes to the loneliness within us;

Heals that which is wounded within us;

Comforts that which grieves within us.

Releases us from that which has dominion over us;

Cleanses us of that which does not belong to us;

Renews that which feels drained within us;

Awakens that which is asleep in us;

Names that which is still formless within us;

Empowers that which is newborn within us;

Consecrates and guides that which is strong within us;

Restores us to this world which needs us;

Reaches out in endless love to others through us.

The risen, living Christ calls us by our name.

--Flora Slosson Wuellner

Sending Forth with Blessing

Let us go forth into the world

To eat more plants and drink more water;

To exercise our minds and our bodies daily;

To grow in love with God, with one another, and with ourselves;

May we blessed be, so that we may be a blessing, in the name of the One God who is our Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer. **Amen.**

Next week – October 10:

- Please bring crayons, markers, or colored pencils
- Erin Kelley – Dance
- Sonya Miller-Kravetz - Qigong

**A JOURNEY IN WOMEN'S WELLNESS
SESSION 4
OCTOBER 10, 2009**

Mandalas are a form of spiritual visual art. According to *The Mandala Project*, Carl Jung called mandalas archetypes, or universal symbols, found in every culture in the world in some form.

The "circle with a center" is the basic structure of creation that is seen in biology, geology, chemistry, physics, and astronomy. Each atom is a mandala. Snail's shells, tree rings, and flowers are examples of nature's mandalas.

A mandala represents wholeness. It can be seen as a model for the organization of life itself.

Derived from a Sanskrit word loosely translated as "circle," a mandala may be defined as "an integrating structure organized around a unifying center."

Tibetan monks and Navajo Indians create sand mandalas to express the impermanence of life.

Labyrinths are mandalas that are large enough to walk upon.

Using markers, crayons, or colored pencils, you are invited to color one or more mandalas during our time together this morning.

You may wish to personalize your mandala by adding symbols or words inside the spaces. When you feel you are done, look at your creation. Sit with it. Let it speak to you. Absorb it. Your drawing may suddenly remind you of something—perhaps another time, place, symbol, or ritual.

If you were to give your mandala a title, what would it be?

Greetings

Announcements

- Susan Evans, Tai Chi instructor, is gathering a list of persons who would be interested in a series of 10 one-hour classes beginning the week of January 11, 2010. Cost is \$75 per person for the series. Call 513-779-4757, leaving your name and phone number. Time and location TBA.
- Scales are available in the kitchen. **Please record today's weight on your Health Survey.**
- Jackie Marshall will share information later this morning on the significance of the health analysis that is available by using her "fancy-schmancy" scale.

Herstory of the Week: Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179)

- Born the 10th child (tithe) of a noble family, she was dedicated at birth to the Church
- Began having visions at age 3. Visions continued throughout her life and may have been the result of migraine attacks.
- At age 8 was sent to receive education with an anchoress, Jutta
- Created visionary artwork, including mandalas
- Produced major works of theology and visionary writings
- Wrote treatises on natural history, and the medicinal uses of plants, animals, trees and stones
- The first composer whose biography is known
- Wrote in the plainchant tradition. Described music as the means of recapturing the original joy and beauty of paradise.
- Consulted by bishops, popes and kings
- At age 38 was elected abbess of her Benedictine convent
- Scientific ideas came from ancient Greek concepts of the four elements: earth, wind, fire and water, corresponding with the four humors of the body—choler (yellow bile), blood, phlegm, melancholy (black bile). Saw illness as imbalance of the four humors. Balance therefore health could be restored through eating the plant or animal that contained the quality your body was lacking.
- Writings include the first known description of the female orgasm.

From the writings of Hildegard:

“O human, see then the human being rightly: the human being has heaven and earth and the whole creation in itself, and yet is a complete form, and in it everything is already present, though hidden.”

“The Articulation of the Body”

from *Book of Divine Works*

“For just as the word of God has penetrated everything in creation, the soul penetrates the whole body in order to have an effect on it. The soul is the green life-force of the flesh. For, indeed, the body grows and progresses through the soul, just as the Earth becomes fruitful through moisture.”

Book of Divine Works, p. 96-97

Scripture Foundation for Session 4:

“So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.” Genesis 1:27 (New Revised Standard Version)

Spiritual Exercise: Scripture Reflection with Art and Music

- Background music during this spiritual exercise was composed by Hildegard of Bingen.
- Continue to color a mandala of your choice as you listen to this scripture reading:

Genesis 1:26-2:3 (NRSV)

Then God said, “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.”

So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.” God said, “See, I have given you every plant yielding seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so. God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude. And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation.

- Continuing with your artwork, silently consider these reflection questions:
 - God created humankind in God’s image. What does this statement from scripture mean to you?
 - God gave every plant to humans and animals for food. What guidance does this statement give to you regarding a healthy 21st century diet?
 - God rested on the seventh day. How are you making time in your life for rest? For sufficient sleep?
 - What are you creating?

SPECIAL PRESENTATION: Dancing with Erin Kelley

***COMFORT BREAK – 5 minutes**

CALL TO RE-GATHER IN COMMUNITY: Praising God with All Creation

“Creating God, Your Fingers Trace”

Creating God, your fingers trace
The bold designs of farthest space;
Alleluia! Alleluia!
Let sun and moon and stars and light
And what lies hidden praise your might.
Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia,
Alleluia!

Tune: LASST UNS ERFREUNEN; Words: Jeffrey Rowthorn, adapted; Upper Room Worshipbook, 2006

NUTRITION UPDATE: Rev. Jackie Marshall – more about that scale

SPECIAL PRESENTATION: QIGONG with Sonya Miller-Kravetz, RPh, LMT

CLOSING SONG – “Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God, all creatures here below;
Alleluia! Alleluia!
Praise God, the source of all our gifts!
Praise Jesus Christ, whose power uplifts!
Praise the Spirit, Holy Spirit! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

Tune: LASST UNS ERFREUNEN; Words: Thomas Ken; adapted by Gilbert H. Vieira; Upper Room Worshipbook, 2006

Sending Forth with Blessing

Let us go forth into the world

To eat more plants and drink more water;

To exercise our minds and our bodies daily;

To grow in love with God, with one another, and with ourselves;

May we blessed be, so that we may be a blessing, in the name of the One God who is our Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer. **Amen.**

AKH, 2009

Next week – October 17:

- **NO CLASS – CONSIGNMENT SALE DAY**

Next class – October 24:

- **Beth Tysl – Yoga**
- **Cindy Ware – Ojos de Dios woven mandalas**

A JOURNEY IN WOMEN'S WELLNESS
SESSION 5
OCTOBER 24, 2009

Greetings

Announcements

- Scales are available in the kitchen. **Please record today's weight on your Health Survey.**
- Due to family illness, Beth Tysl is unable to be with us today for yoga. Information regarding upcoming yoga opportunities will be available at the Oct. 31 session.
- Blessing of the Animals, today at 1:00 p.m. in the church picnic shelter. Bring your pets, photos of your pets, or stuffed animals. If you cannot attend, you may wish to participate by giving Pastor AK the names of your pets to be included in the blessing.

Herstory of the Week: Patricia D. Brown

- Executive Director, Spiritworks Center for Formation and Leadership, Pittsburg, PA.
- Current work includes teaching yoga in her studio; began study of yoga as therapy for scoliosis
- Author of numerous articles and nine published books, including *Learning to Lead from Your Spiritual Center*, 1996 and *Paths to Prayer: Finding Your Own Way to the Presence of God*, 2003; *30 Days of Hidden Hope for Hard Times: Sustaining Words for Difficult Financial Days*, 2009.
- Ordained Elder in the United Methodist Church; has been pastor of six churches
- Professor of Spiritual Formation, Mars Hill Graduate School, Seattle, WA, 2006-08; Seattle Pacific University, School of Theology, Seattle, WA, 2003-2006
- Previous work includes teaching in public schools; hospital and hospice chaplain; spiritual nurture at United Methodist Conference and General Board levels

From the writings of Patricia Brown on the topic of RELATIONSHIPS:

- *We develop and care for relationships that feed our deepest needs for intimacy.*
- *We intentionally create opportunities where we listen to others and are listened to in ways that nurture the spirit.*

- *We seek safe space to speak the truth, to name that which is false, and to know we are not crazy in systems that are insane.*

Six Practical Suggestions for Intimacy:

1. *Choose friends who are good to you and to themselves.*
2. *Check yourself if you find you are gravitating toward people who are unbalanced.*
3. *Realize that some people simply are incapable of the care and approval you require.*
4. *Choose to see the limits of relationships.*
5. *Enter into relationships with respect for your own individuality.*
6. *Trust your intuition when dealing with other people.*

Learning to Lead from Your Spiritual Center, p. 106-108

Scripture Foundation for Session 5:

Luke 13:10-14 (NRSV)

Now Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And just then there appeared a woman with a spirit that had crippled her for eighteen years. She was bent over and was quite unable to stand up straight. When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said, "Woman, you are set free from your ailment." When he laid his hands on her, immediately she stood up straight and began praising God."

(Silent reflection)

Luke 13:10-14 (King James Version)

And he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself. And when Jesus saw her, he called her to him, and said unto her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity. And he laid his hands on her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God.

(Silent reflection)

Luke 13:10-14 (The Message by Eugene Peterson)

He was teaching in one of the meeting places on the Sabbath. There was a woman present, so twisted and bent over with arthritis that she couldn't even look up. She had been afflicted with this for eighteen years. When Jesus saw her, he called her over. "Woman, you're free!" He laid hands on her and suddenly she was standing straight and tall, giving glory to God.

(Silent reflection)

Spiritual Exercise: Scripture Reflection through Table Conversation

Human health and wholeness involves the well being of body, mind, spirit, and relationships. What do you think caused this woman to be bent over/bowed together for 18 years?

SPECIAL PRESENTATION: Ojo de Dios Mandalas with Cindy Ware

***COMFORT BREAK – 5 minutes**

CALL TO RE-GATHER IN COMMUNITY: “Song of Shalom” by Elise S. Eslinger

When we are living it is in Christ Jesus,
And when we’re dying it is in the Lord.
Both in our living and in our dying,
We belong to God, we belong to God.

God sent Christ Jesus to be our Shalom.
To show us mercy and healing love.
So when in our living and in our dying,
Christ is our Shalom, Christ is our Shalom.

To pain and sorrow Chri-st brings Shalom.
In peace and justice Chri-st brings Shalom.
So when we’re living the ways of Jesus,
We are God’s Shalom, we are God’s Shalom.
Shalom to you now, shalom, my friends.
May God’s full mercies bless you, my friends.
In all your living, and through your loving,
Christ be your Shalom, Christ be your Shalom,
Christ be your Shalom, Christ be your Shalom.

Women’s Wellness: Earth’s Energy and Female Energy (see handout)

Body Prayer (see handout)

CLOSING PRAYER

Creator and Healer of the world, help us to see our part in your work of healing our world and its wounded people. Show us what needs to be torn down and what needs to be built up, that all people may live in peace and safety, enjoying fullness of life. Amen.

Mary Lou Redding, *Upper Room Worshipbook*, 2006

Sending Forth with Blessing

Let us go forth into the world

To eat more plants and drink more water;

To exercise our minds and our bodies daily;

To grow in love with God, with one another, and with ourselves;

May we blessed be, so that we may be a blessing, in the name of the One God who is our Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer. **Amen.**

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Next week – October 31:

- **Last class – review, wrap-up, ending survey**
- **Michelle Elghayesh – Belly Dancing**
- **Closing worship with Sacrament of Holy Communion**

EARTH'S ENERGY AND FEMALE ENERGY

Eastern (Asian) philosophies see that Earth's energy moves up through women's bodies and inward ("drawing-in" energy; centripetal force.) Examples:

- "Mom? Mom!"
- Children must be in same room with mother
- Breastfeeding
- Sexual intercourse

Native American women traditionally wear skirts to access this Earth energy. Centripetal force /drawing-in energy is a grounding force that affects the well being of family systems. When a woman changes her life for the better, her entire family generally benefits. Women can create health for themselves and others.

FEMALE ENERGY AND THE CHAKRAS

- Seven specific energy centers in our bodies
- Emotional/psychological patterns affect women's bodies and our chakras
- Chakras connect our nerves, hormones, and emotions
- Locations of chakras link our physical and energy anatomy
- Each chakra is associated with specific organ systems and specific emotional states

First chakra issues

- Trust; security and safety; survival; independence vs. dependence; fear/fearlessness
- House; family; sexual identity; race; tribe; loyalty, duty, obligation
- "I'm all alone." "Nobody cares." "No one is here for me." "I'll starve."
- Spine, rectum, hip joints, blood, immune system
- Chronic spinal problems; back pain; sciatica; scoliosis; rectal tumors/cancer; chronic fatigue; fibromyalgia; autoimmune diseases; arthritis; skin problems

Second chakra issues

- How we go about getting what we want; what we go after
- Active vs. passive; inhibited or uninhibited; direct or indirect; "go-getter" or wait for things to come to us; shame vs. shameless; financial security; social status; children
- Relationships: dependent or independent; needed by others, or do we need others; do we take more than we give, or vice-versa; boundary issues; assertive or submissive; do we protect others, or do others protect us; do we oppose others, or do we give in to opinions and actions of others; fear of abandonment

- “I don’t feel heard by you.” “You never come to visit.” “He doesn’t write, he doesn’t call.” “No one will ever love me.” “You’re never there for me.”
- Pelvic and reproductive organs; bladder; appendix; large intestine; lower vertebrae; pelvis
- OB/GYN problems; fibroid tumors; sexual/fertility issues; back pain; urinary problems
- The creativity center of the physical/energetic body; produces babies, relationships, careers, novels; insights; creative and artistic works
- Where we carry “stuff”

Third chakra issues

- Self-esteem; self-confidence; self-respect; responsible vs. irresponsible; aggressive or defensive; rage. Territorial? Threatening or intimidating? Trapped, wanting to escape? Competitiveness: Can we both win and lose? Can we handle both gains and losses?
- “If I don’t do it, it won’t get done.” “I’ll never be good enough.” “It’s OK. I’ll do it myself.”
- Gall bladder; liver; pancreas; stomach; small intestine; lower esophagus; kidney; spleen; middle spine
- Ulcers; colon problems; heartburn; pancreatitis/diabetes; constipation, diarrhea; anorexia and bulimia; hepatitis; liver dysfunction; adrenal dysfunction; substance abuse

Fourth chakra issues

- Capacity to express ourselves emotionally; ability to participate in true partnerships in which members are equally powerful and vulnerable; balance; love; nurture of self vs. nurture of others; intimacy with self and others; sadness that cannot be expressed
- Related to second chakra: uterus called “low heart,” heart in chest is “high heart;” if “low heart” has been closed through rape, incest, abuse, or shame, a woman has difficulty opening her “high heart” to healthy relationships
- Heart; lungs; blood vessels; shoulders; ribs/breasts; diaphragm; upper esophagus
- Coronary artery disease; heart disease; hypertension; asthma/allergy; lung cancer; pneumonia; upper back and shoulder problems; breast problems, including cancer

Fifth (communication), Sixth (“third eye”), and Seventh (faith and values) chakras are less specific to gender issues than are the lower four.

From *Women’s Bodies, Women’s Wisdom: Creating Physical and Emotional Health and Healing*, Christiane Northrup, M.D., 1998, p. 72-97.

BODY PRAYER – Seek peace, and pursue it.

A Reading: Psalm 34:4-5, 11-14

I sought the LORD, and God answered me.
 God delivered me from all my fears.
 Look to the LORD, and be radiant;
 So your faces shall never be ashamed.
 Come, O children, listen to me;
 I will teach you the fear of the LORD.
 Which of you desires life,
 And covets many days to enjoy good?
 Keep your tongue from evil,
 And your lips from speaking deceit.
 Depart from evil, and do good;
 Seek peace, and pursue it.

Silent Reflection

When was the last time you felt at ease and at peace in all your relationships?

What brought about that condition?

What can you do to bring more of that peace into your life now and in the future?

Praying with the Body, Heart, and Soul

My Redeemer, my Savior,
Inhale: Open your heart and let those words pour in.

You protect me from harm.
Exhale: Feel God's love casting out everything you fear.

I look at your radiance.
Inhale: Radiate your arms from your heart like rays of the morning sun.

And my face lights up.
Exhale: Radiate God's goodness with a smile.

You call me your beloved child.
Inhale: look up like a little child would to a loving mother.

Gently, you teach me obedience.
Exhale: Feel the acceptance that a much-loved, well-cared-for child might feel.

Only your beauty I will speak of.

Inhale: Left foot forward, right hand on your front knee, raise your left hand, and acknowledge the beauty of all creation. Repeat on other side.

Only your truth I shall proclaim.

Exhale: Bring your right hand to your front knee. Swing your left hand toward the back, spreading God's love wherever you are. Repeat on the other side.

Leave, vanity of vanities.

Inhale: Open your heart and release worldly attachments.

It is time for me to seek peace.

Exhale: Let your body go and rest in God's peace.

Praying with the Body: Bringing the Psalms to Life, Roy DeLeon, 2009, p. 12-13.

**A JOURNEY IN WOMEN'S WELLNESS
SESSION 6
OCTOBER 31, 2009**

Greetings

Announcements

- Scales are available in the kitchen. **Please record today's weight on your Health Survey.**
- Blood pressure checks will be done throughout the morning. **Please record today's blood pressure on your Health Survey.**
- **Turn in your Health Survey and your Session Six Survey** at the registration table before you leave today.
- Using UM Hymnal today: #593 "Here I Am, Lord" as Gathering Song after break
Page 7, A Service of Word and Table I, beginning at The Invitation
- Prayer concern – family and friends of Chad Cox, especially Chelle Precht and Jackie Potts of our Wellness group

Spiritual Exercise – "Here I Am" Prayer

This practice is adapted from Russian Orthodox Archbishop Anthony Bloom's classic book *Beginning to Pray* (1970.)

Intention: To be here now in prayer.

- Say to yourself, "I will do nothing for five minutes."
- Notice your own bodily presence—how your body feels next to your chair; how your feet feel against the floor. Relax your body. Notice what you feel inside.
- Now notice the presence of all that is around you. Say to yourself, "Here I am in the presence of my sisters on our journey in wellness. Be aware of the furniture, walls, and people in the room. Be present and silent in your environment. Relax even more.
- Now say to yourself, "Here I am in the presence of God." Repeat silently to God, "Here I am." Bask in the presence of the Holy One.

--from *50 Ways to Pray: Practices from Many Traditions and Times*, by Teresa A. Blythe, Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2006, p. 31-32

Herstory of the Week: Gertrude of Helfta (1256-1302)

- Taken to live at Helfta Abbey in Germany near Eisleben at age 5
- Experienced great melancholy (depression) during her early 20's
- Received salvation through a mystical conversion experience shortly before her 25th birthday. In the image of a "handsome and gracious" youth of 16, Christ said to her in a courteous and gentle voice, "Soon will come your salvation, why are you so sad? Is it because you have no one to confide in that you are sorrowful? I will save you. I will deliver you. Do not fear."
- Lived a well-ordered monastic life of study and contemplation
- Her life was centered in the daily rhythm of the Divine Office (fixed hour prayer under Benedictine Rule of Life) and daily Eucharist
- Major work *The Herald of Divine Love* describes how Gertrud often experienced the mystical touches of God, which she called the "hidden manna," in both the Eucharist (Sacrament of Holy Communion) and the Divine Office (community prayer at fixed times of the day and night)
- Her second major work, *Spiritual Exercises*, is a collection of meditations and prayers based on scripture and liturgy which she composed for use by the nuns at Helfta Abbey
- Gertrude's writings describe her friendship and intimacy based on *faith as relationship*: "Know that I am with you always; yes, to the end of time." (Matt. 28:20)
- Her life was immersed in the Church's liturgy.
- Gertrude practiced *dialogic prayer*, in which she spoke to God as friend to friend, much the way Adam spoke companionably with God in the Garden of Eden. Thomas Merton calls this form of prayer the gift of "free speech"
- Gertrude's writings describe "heart knowledge" of God, referring to the ancient Biblical tradition of the heart as an organ of knowing, thinking, and understanding

--from *Medieval Women Monastics: Wisdom's Wellsprings*,
Miriam Schmitt and Linda Kulzer, editors, Collegeville, MN:
The Liturgical Press, 1996, p. 245-259

SPECIAL PRESENTATION: Belly Dancing with Michelle Elghayesh

COMPLETION OF SESSION 6 SURVEY AND HEALTH SURVEY

- *Please turn in both surveys at the Registration Table before you take your Comfort Break*

COMFORT BREAK

CALL TO RE-GATHER IN COMMUNITY: “Here I Am, Lord” UMH #593

REFLECTIONS ON A JOURNEY IN WOMEN’S WELLNESS

- What we’ve learned: review, wrap-up, remaining questions
- Who are my sisters? How will I stay in supportive relationship with them?
- Next steps?

CLOSING WORSHIP WITH SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION

Scripture Foundation for Session 6:

Luke 9:10-17 (NRSV)

On their return the apostles told Jesus all they had done. He took them with him and withdrew privately to a city called Bethsaida. When the crowds found out about it, they followed him; and he welcomed them, and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who needed to be cured.

The day was drawing to a close, and the twelve came to him and said, “Send the crowd away, so that they may go into the surrounding villages and countryside, to lodge and get provisions; for we are here in a deserted place.” But he said to them, “You give them something to eat.” They said, “We have no more than five loaves and two fish—unless we are to go and buy food for all these people.” For there were about five thousand men. And he said to his disciples, “Make them sit down in groups of about fifty each.” They did so and made them all sit down. And taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke them, and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd. And all ate and were filled. What was left over was gathered up, twelve baskets of broken pieces.

Reflection questions:

- In what ways does this scripture remind you of our Journey in Women’s Wellness?
- What words or phrases related to healing, well being, and wholeness in body, mind, spirit, and relationships catch your attention?
- What does Luke 9:10-17 suggest about creativity?

A Service of Word and Table I, UM Hymnal page 7, The Invitation

Sending Forth with Blessing

Let us go forth into the world

 To eat more plants and drink more water;

 To exercise our minds and our bodies daily;

 To grow in love with God, with one another, and with ourselves;

May we blessed be, so that we may be a blessing, in the name of the One God
who is our Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer. **Amen.**

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APPENDIX B

A JOURNEY IN WOMEN'S WELLNESS SURVEYS

SURVEY AS WE BEGIN OUR WELLNESS JOURNEY – 9/19/09

Name _____ Year of Birth _____

Body Wellness:

Briefly note any major injuries or illnesses in the past.

Are you currently dealing with any physical health challenges? If so, describe.

List any medications you take regularly.

Spiritual Wellness:

Briefly describe your current spiritual health.

Describe your current spiritual or religious practices.

Mental Wellness:

What is the title/author of the most recent book you have been reading?

What do you do to keep your mind alert and active?

What are your hobbies?

What brings you joy?

What brings you sadness?

Relationship Wellness

Briefly describe your support system.

If you were in trouble, who would be there to help you?

What challenging personal relationship issues are you currently facing?

As we begin our Journey in Women's Wellness

Rate your current stress level on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being almost none.

What is your greatest source of stress?

What attracted you to this class?

How do you hope to benefit from this class?

MY HEALTH STATISTICS

Name _____

Height in Inches without shoes Sept. 26 _____

Waist measurement Sept. 26 _____ Waist measurement Oct. 31 _____

Blood Pressure Sept. 26 _____ Blood Pressure Oct. 31 _____

Weight in Pounds:

September 26 _____

October 3 _____

October 10 _____

October 17 _____

October 24 _____

October 31 _____

Body Mass Index September 26 _____

Height/Weight Chart Category September 26 _____

Body Mass Index October 31 _____

Height/Weight Chart Category October 31 _____

SURVEY – SESSION 2 – September 26, 2009

Name _____ Date _____

1. How would you rate your current physical health?

☐ Excellent ☐ Very good ☐ Good ☐ Fair ☐ Poor

2. During the past 6 weeks, how often have you exercised for 30 minutes or more? Include activities such as walking, swimming, dancing, biking, fitness class, workout at home or gym, etc.

☐ Daily ☐ 5-6 times weekly ☐ 2-4 times weekly ☐ 1 time weekly
☐ Sometimes ☐ Never

3. Which of the following phrases best describes your current eating habits?

☐ I always try to make healthy choices☐ I usually try to make healthy choices☐ I sometimes make healthy choices☐ I eat whatever is available regardless of how healthy it is

4. How would you rate your current spiritual health?

☐ Excellent ☐ Very good ☐ Good ☐ Fair ☐ Poor

5. During the past 6 weeks, how often have you engaged in some form of prayer, meditation, spiritual exercise, or discipline?

☐ Daily ☐ 5-6 times weekly ☐ 2-4 times weekly ☐ 1 time weekly
☐ Sometimes ☐ Never

SURVEY – SESSION 3 – October 3, 2009

Name _____ Date _____

6. Overall, how would you describe your state of mind during the past 6 weeks?

___ Usually happy ___ Sometimes happy ___ Neither happy nor sad

___ More sadness than happiness ___ Mostly sad

7. How would you rate the level of stress in your life during the past 6 weeks?

___ Not at all stressful ___ Not very stressful ___ Somewhat stressful

___ Very stressful ___ Extremely stressful

3. During the past 6 weeks, how often have you engaged in a hobby, sports, leisure, or creative activity?

___ Daily ___ 5-6 times weekly ___ 2-4 times weekly ___ 1 time weekly

___ Sometimes ___ Never

4. During the past 6 weeks, how often have you communicated with family, friends, or neighbors?

___ Throughout each day ___ Daily ___ Several times weekly

___ About once a week ___ Occasionally ___ Never

SESSION 6 SURVEY – Date taken _____

Name _____ Year of Birth _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

1. Since September 19, what physical wellness goals have you been working toward?

2. What changes in your physical wellness have you experienced since September 19?

___ I made progress toward my goals

___ No change

___ I am less physically healthy now than I was on September 19

3. Since September 19, what spiritual wellness goals have you been working toward?

4. What changes in your spiritual wellness have you experienced since September 19?

___ I made progress toward my spiritual wellness goals

___ No change

___ I am less spiritually healthy now than I was on September 19

5. Since September 19, what mental wellness goals have you been working toward?

6. What changes in your mental wellness have you experienced since September 19?

___ I made progress toward my mental wellness goals

___ No change

___ I am less mentally healthy now than I was on September 19

7. Since September 19, what relationship wellness goals have you been working toward?

8. What changes in the health of your relationships have you experienced since September 19?

___ I made progress toward my relationship wellness goals

___ No change

___ My relationships are less healthy now than on September 19

9. How would you rate the level of stress in your life since September 19?

___ Not at all stressful

___ Not very stressful

___ Somewhat stressful

___ Very stressful

___ Extremely stressful

10. What changes in your ability to cope with stress have you experienced since September 19?

☐ I am better able to cope with stress

☐ No change

☐ I feel less able to cope with stress

11. What changes in your energy level have you experienced since September 19?

☐ I have more energy

☐ No change

☐ I have less energy

12. What changes in your physical activity level have you experienced since September 19? (examples: walking, dancing, exercising, tai chi, qigong, yoga, belly dancing)

☐ My level of physical activity has increased

☐ No change

☐ My level of physical activity has decreased

13. What changes have you made in your diet since September 19? Check all that apply.

☐ I am more aware of good nutrition

☐ I set a weight loss goal

☐ I eat out less often

☐ I have changed some of my grocery shopping habits

☐ I am preparing healthier meals for myself and my family

☐ I am eating more plants (fruits, vegetables, grains, nuts, etc.)

___ I am keeping a food diary of what I eat and drink each day

___ I have lost weight

___ I am drinking more water

___ I have not changed my diet since September 19

14. If you lost weight since September 19, how many pounds did you lose?

15. Since September 19, what changes have you experienced in your creativity? Check all that apply.

___ I have engaged in a crafts or a visual arts activity more often than before

___ I feel more creative

___ I am learning a new skill

___ I have engaged in making music (singing, humming, whistling, playing an instrument) more often than before

___ I bought new clothes

___ I re-organized one or more rooms of my home since September 19

___ I picked up a hobby or creative or performing arts activity that I used to do when I was younger

___ I am writing more (examples: journaling, writing poetry, writing letters)

___ I feel better about myself now

___ I changed my hairstyle or hair color since September 19

___ I prepared food, using one or more new recipes since September 19

___ I began taking lessons in a creative, artistic, or performing arts activity since September 19

___ I hear music on "the radio in my head" more often than before

___ I am thinking about taking a class or private lessons

___ I am taking better care of myself and others

___ I redecorated one or more rooms of my home since September 19

___ I started a new hobby

___ People tell me that I seem more creative lately

16. How did you benefit from *A Journey in Women's Wellness*?

17. Check all class activities below that you found helpful to your life and health:

___ Jane Zopff – Harp Music for Meditation

___ Susan Evans – Tai Chi

___ Jackie Marshall – Nutrition

___ Bryn Brock – Healing Touch

___ Jay Nesselroad – Drumming Circle

___ Erin Kelley – Dance

___ Sonya Miller-Kravetz – Qigong

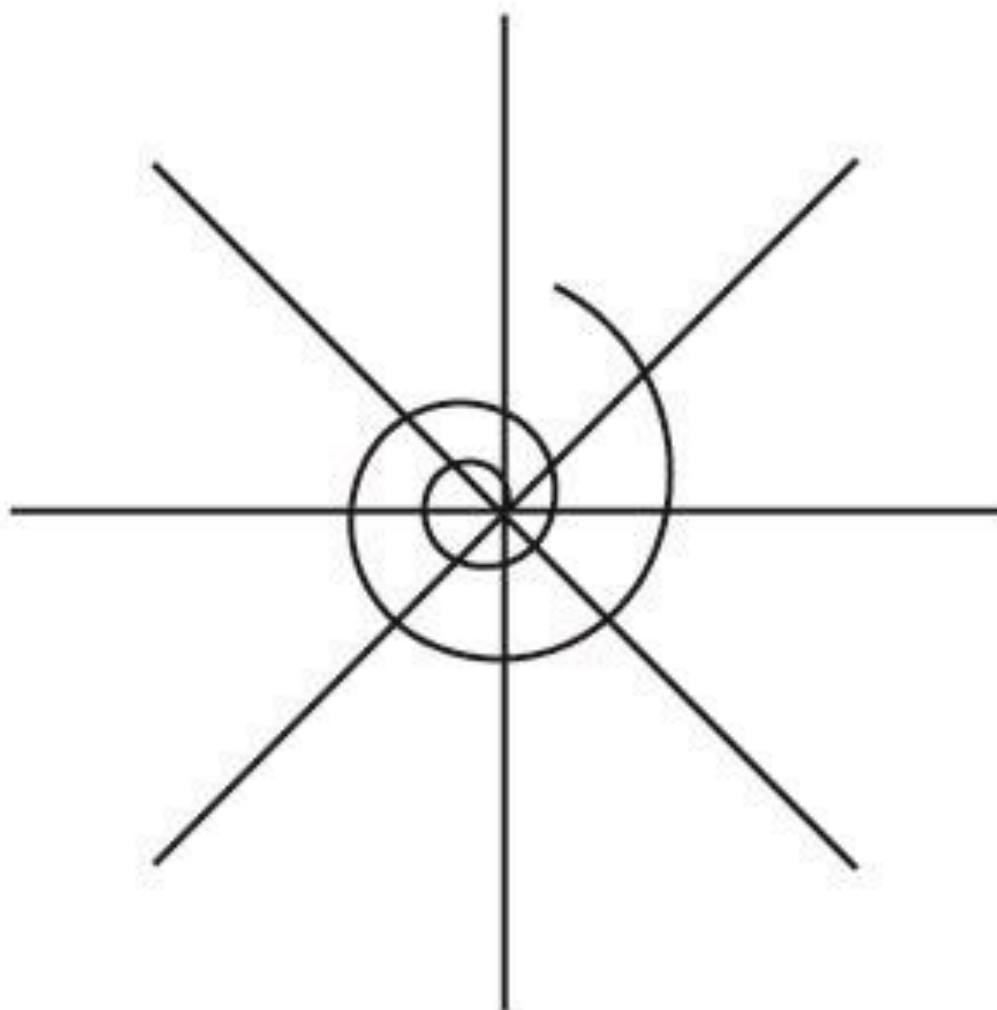
___ Cindy Ware – Ojo de Dios Mandalas

___ Belly Dancing – Michelle Elghayesh

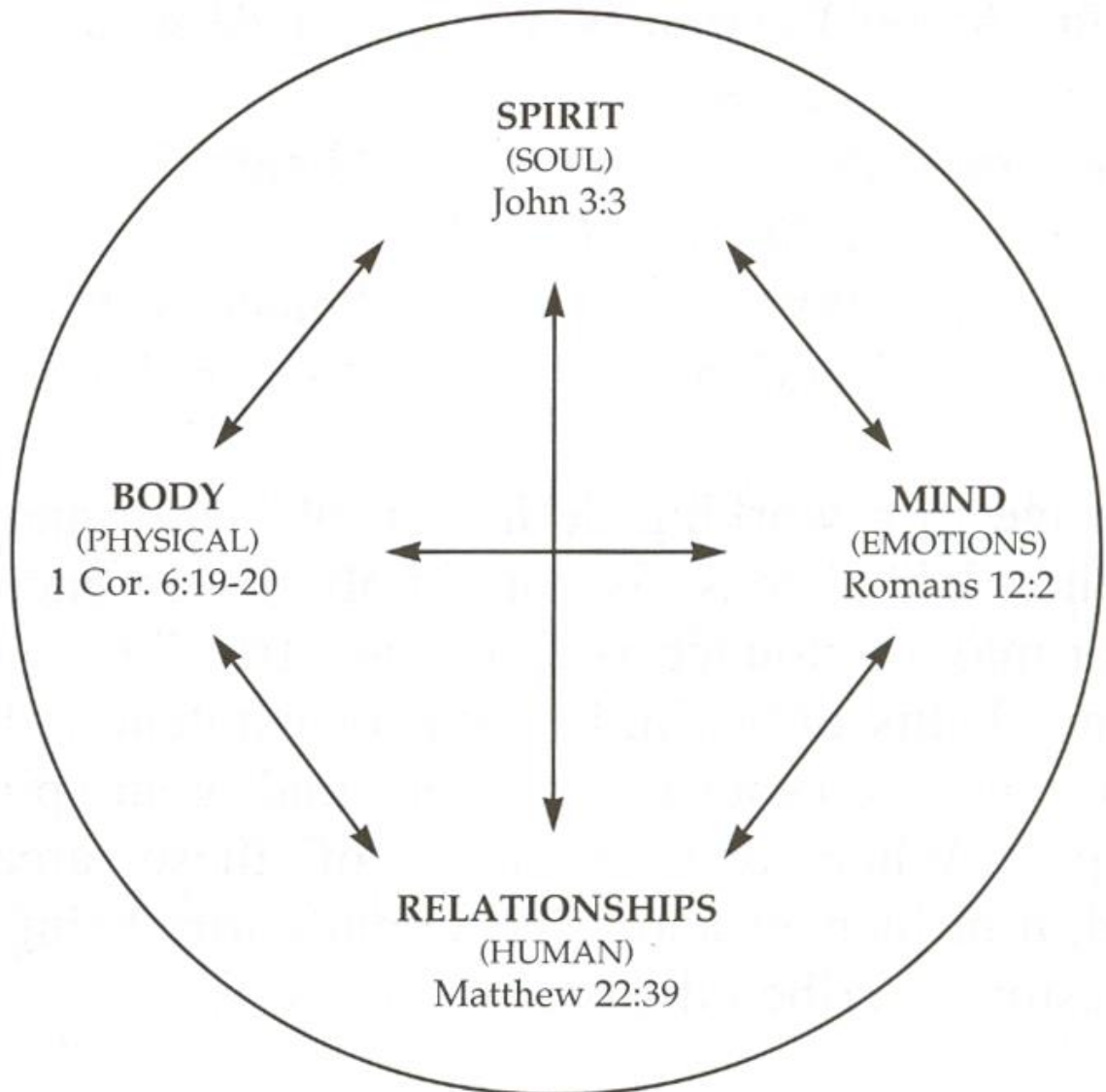
18. What class activities did you enjoy the most?

19. What class activities did you enjoy the least?

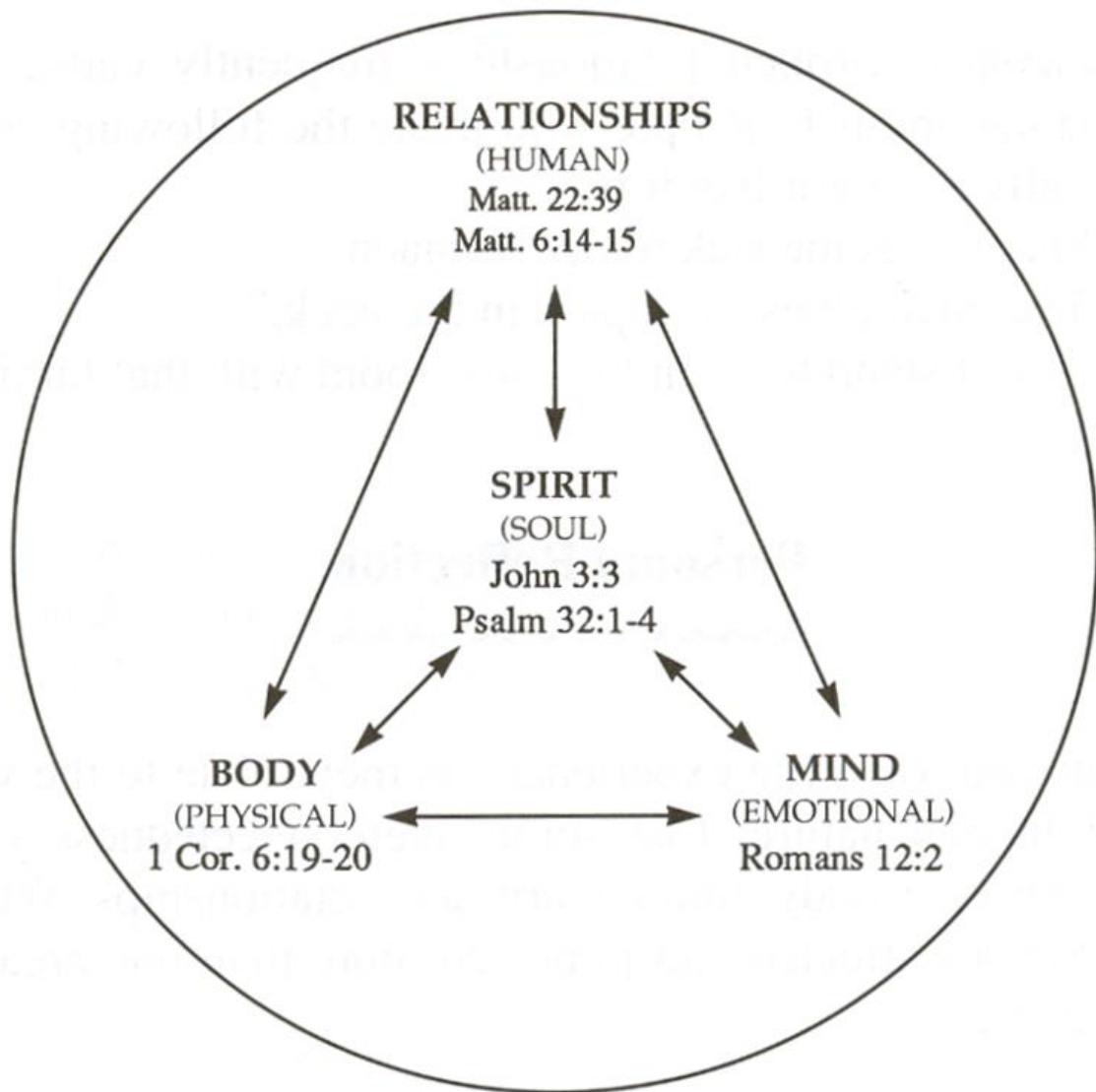
20. How many of the six sessions did you attend?
21. Which class activities would you be most interested in doing again?
22. What suggestions do you have for improving the class?
23. Look at the mandala on the next page. What does it suggest or symbolize to you as you consider holistic human health?
22. Do you have any further comments regarding your experience of *A Journey in Women's Wellness*?



APPENDIX C**WAGNER'S FOUR-FOLD CONCEPT OF HEALTH**



WAGNER'S FOUR AREAS OF HOLISTIC HUMAN HEALTH
Figure One



WAGNER'S FOUR AREAS OF HOLISTIC HUMAN HEALTH
Figure Two

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